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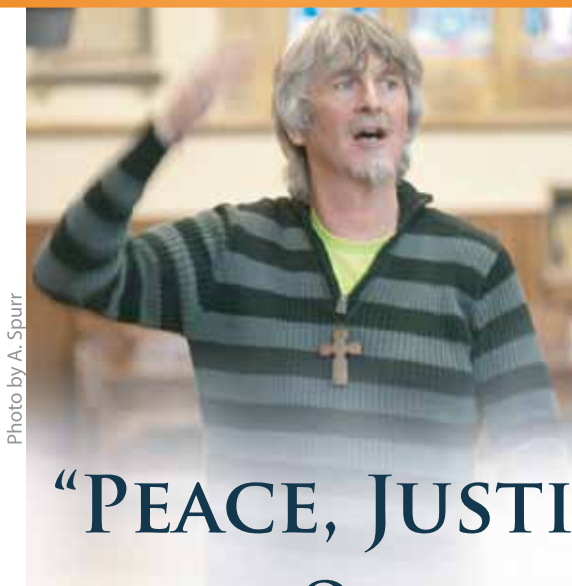


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See what the future has to say.

"The world is changing. The church is shifting. We need a multitude of fresh and diverse voices addressing the challenge of faith and the common good." —Jim Wallis, *president and co-founder, Sojourners*

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IMPLEMENTATION OF the Affordable Care Act (aka Obamacare) is proceeding, yet our health-care system is still broken, with too many people without adequate coverage or quality care. People of faith are stepping into the breach with a recognition that healing is both physical and spiritual. Alicia de los Reyes takes us inside the world of Pentecostal faith healing for the revival of a tradition of healing that goes back to the time of Jesus. And veteran journalist Bob Smietana describes a new cooperation between churches and health-care providers in Memphis, Tenn. The Congregational Health Network now includes more than 500 congregations working with a local hospital system to provide education and support networks for patients.

Healing, in the broadest sense, has many roots. Reta Halteman Finger writes of the “littlest ones” who are at the heart of the reign of God that Jesus lived and preached. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson applies the same insights to the sizable migration to the U.S. and its challenge for local churches to live the connection between God’s love and their stance toward the “other.”

Tornados, hurricanes, wildfires, and floods remind us of the continuing escalation of climate change. Experiences created by these extreme weather events—the loss of homes and neighborhoods, changes in



lifestyle, and even the sense that a part of God is being lost—can lead to profound grief. Katharine M. Preston suggests that recognizing the “tasks of mourning” could help in grieving those losses—and moving to action.

Our Commentary section explores the ongoing scandal of the Guantanamo Bay prison, the tragic factory collapse in Bangladesh, and the injustice of mandatory minimum sentencing laws. All three come from neglecting what Catholic social teaching calls the dignity of the human person and failing to honor the sacredness of all those made in the image of God. ■

Letters

PORNIFIED CULTURE

I, too, am disgusted by the pornification of American cultural life described by Valerie Weaver Zercher in “It’s Hip to be Plain” (June 2013). It is indeed not amusing.

Joseph Frango

Burlington, Massachusetts

PREVENTION AND ACTION

Sojourners published another great article on human trafficking: “Enslaved at the Border” (June 2013), by Curt Devine. However, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was

lived such a life for all of us to emulate. He has passed the baton to our generation, and now it’s up to us to pass it on.

Ralph Kucera

Santa Maria, California

MENTAL HELP

Thank you for printing the excerpt “This Doesn’t Go Away” (June 2013) from *Troubled Minds*, by Amy Simpson. As the mother of a young woman challenged daily by two mental disorders, I can assure you that Simpson speaks the truth about men-

(May 2013) that I immediately printed copies of the corresponding covenant and sent them to my five adult children and 13 grandchildren with a cover letter asking them to read, consider, and discuss it, and then save the covenant so they can reread it every year.

Arthur Lutton

Biddeford, Maine

A HARD SELL

At its best, *Sojourners* calls out with the prophetic voice of the gospel, demanding justice in Christ’s name. At its worst, it reflexively subjects us to nonsense from the anti-artists’ rights crowd. In “Owning the Future” (May 2013), did columnist Danny Duncan Collum really try to justify the large-scale theft of scholarly work by incongruously invoking the awful behavior of Monsanto, apparently hoping that he wouldn’t get called on it because of the tragic suicide of a young man? That is shamefully manipulative and intellectually dishonest. How ironic it is to extol the virtues of making scholarship available for free in a copyrighted magazine with no shortage of ads of scholarship for sale. We expect and deserve much better from *Sojourners*.

Gary Roberts

Los Angeles, California

“I was moved to silent tears of joy ...”

not mentioned. Nothing will stop human trafficking, but this international treaty could greatly reduce it. The treaty must be ratified by our Senate to become official. If you are serious about preventing human trafficking, tell your readers what they can do about it.

Jake Terpstra

Grand Rapids, Michigan

A GODLY LEGACY

I was moved to silent tears of joy after reading Jim Wallis’ reflection “Loving Like Christ” (June 2013) about the pervasive and private influence Gordon Cosby had on so many lives. I was reminded of the passage where Jesus says, “You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world.” Cosby

tal illness. It never goes away. People with mental illness cannot “snap out of it” or just “learn to cope with it.” They need what many do not get: expert diagnosis, medication, and therapy. People with mental illnesses can lead lives of recovery, but they need support from their families and communities. Faith-based groups can do much in this area to help. They need only to become educated and overcome their fears. Thank you for highlighting this issue in your magazine.

Lynn Czarniecki

Watchung, New Jersey

COVENANT VALUE

I was so taken by Jim Wallis’ editorial “A Global Call for a New Social Covenant”

Your name here! Write to letters@sojo.net or Letters, *Sojourners*, 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. Include your name, city, and state. Letters may be edited.

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BY JIM WALLIS

My Unexpected Diagnosis



THIS IS A very personal column. Last December I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. There were no symptoms, just a routine blood test. I was on a conference call when the doctor phoned with the biopsy results, but I continued on with the other call assuming I could return it later to hear that there were no problems. There *were* problems, he told me, and I would need to see a surgeon.

I felt incredulous about the news. I was about to launch a book tour and everything seemed to be in control. Sojourners was involved in intense advocacy work around immigration reform, gun violence, and the budget/sequester battles. There had to be a mistake, or surely some convenient

“couldn’t have gone better,” the doctors say, and I seem to be recovering well. They keep telling me to go slow and take my time, which is not only good physical advice for healthy recovery but also spiritual counsel for those of us who sometimes tell time by how much we hope we are changing the world.

This was certainly more “major” surgery than I was acknowledging and admitting to myself. I was stunned by the news in December, and wanted to keep it private—partly to avoid answering too many public questions on it, but also likely because of some self-denial about it all. During this whole process, I’m learning more and more lessons about losing control and learning to trust instead.

I was in very good hands with my surgeon, and I feel our work is in good hands with all of my colleagues at Sojourners, as I take a few weeks now to rest and recover. It’s never just about a leader here at Sojourners because we have such a remarkable team; and it’s never just about the team because we have such an extraordinary mission; but it’s never even just about our mission because we have a God who will always find ways to bring love and justice into the world with and without us, and sometimes despite our best efforts and human attempts to keep “control.”

I spoke with a few close friends before going in for my cancer surgery. My old and dear friend Wesley Granberg-Michaelson contrasted our need for control with the “Prayer of Abandonment” by Charles de Foucauld: “I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will. Whatever you may do, I thank you: I am ready for all, I accept all. Let only your will be done in me. ... Into your hands I commend my soul; I offer it to you with all the love of my heart, for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into

your hands, without reserve, and with boundless confidence, for you are my Father.”

It was a perfect prayer for surgery and recovery, and I hope one I remember before my next book tour! A week after surgery, B.J. Heyboer, a colleague at the publisher Brazos Press, wrote me what a member of her discernment committee for the Episcopal priesthood had said to her: “Control is an illusion, an illusion that we all pursue. But the sooner you see it as the illusion it is, the better off you—and your ministry—will be.” My friend Richard Rohr told me, “These things change your relationship to God.”

Sitting in that hospital room, even in times of pain or anxiety, I thought about the billions of people around the world who don’t have all these health-care resources available to them as we do. That must become a fundamental issue of love and justice for us, and I hope this experience will make it all more personal for me.

My pastor, Jeff Haggray, suggested I not be so private about all this, and that it might be time to offer some personal reflections on this whole process, which might be helpful to other people. So I decided to write this.

But life goes on, and I still coached my son’s Little League baseball team through the playoffs—sitting in a chair behind the dugout fence, at doctor’s orders, so as not to have to dodge line drives while coaching at third base! My time with these 10-year-olds was my best therapy for recovery, and they even won the championship!

I would appreciate your prayers for all of us who are wrestling this summer with issues of physical health and spiritual transformation. ■

Jim Wallis is editor-in-chief of Sojourners. A version of this column ran on the God’s Politics blog.

“Control is an illusion,
an illusion that we all pursue.”

treatment would suffice. Certainly, I would work this all out privately, and stay on schedule for everything else. But then came further testing and discussions of medical options—and anxiety began to grow.

The tour for my latest book, *On God’s Side*, had to be postponed without announcing why. I kept the health news to a small circle of family, friends, and senior staff, and I did my best to go on as if this wasn’t happening. But it was.

My care shifted to the research center at the National Institutes of Health. There, I took part in a new program using resolution MRI to guide surgical decisions. Such opportunities are available to anyone (people can find out about the work of NIH on its website—sadly, this critical work is being severely cut in the sequester). The NIH staff’s extraordinary knowledge of cancer was immediately evident, as was the wonderful care they showed me.

In early June, I had major surgery for prostate cancer. The surgery



Candles for Peace

August 6 and 9 mark the 68th anniversaries of the U.S. atomic bombing of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II. In commemoration, paper lanterns float on the Motoyasu River in front of the Genbaku Dome, a memorial for the more than 140,000 people killed in the nuclear attack on Hiroshima.

By David P. Gushee

Mr. Obama, Close Down This Jail!

Guantanamo reminds us of the fragility of constitutional democracy.

PUBLIC PRESSURE IS finally building on President Obama to fulfill his promise to close the Guantanamo prison, which still houses 166 miserable leftovers from the Bush-Cheney “war on terror.” That pressure is well-placed. Gitmo has been a disaster from the beginning. Christians and other people of faith must join in calling for its closure.

Detainees were originally shipped to Gitmo in the vain hope of avoiding the reach of the U.S. judiciary. In this sense Gitmo was conceived in Constitution-evading sin. The Supreme Court rejected the evasion in 2006, but the damage was already done.

Some of the detainees brought to Gitmo were tortured. This has been confirmed by numerous sources, including a leaked 2006 Red Cross report and the 577-page report of a bipartisan blue-ribbon detainee panel organized by The Constitution Project, on which I served.

More than half of the remaining detainees have been cleared for release, but for

domestic and geopolitical reasons they continue to be held. More than 100 of them are currently on a hunger strike, with dozens being force-fed, a practice that violates both American Medical Association and World Medical Association standards and which our Detainee Task Force condemned unequivocally.

Some detainees cannot be tried because the evidence against them was obtained by brutal or torturous means and is tainted or would be embarrassing to the U.S. Others are slated for trials in novel military commissions whose legal problems are so severe that they have not proceeded. Civilian trials on U.S. soil were blocked in 2009 by a fearful, recalcitrant Congress. So 166 men are held in limbo indefinitely, without trial and without foreseeable prospect of release. This is unconstitutional and a violation of the most basic legal and human rights.

There are many lessons to be learned from this debacle, especially if one searches

deeply into its origins.

First, it was a mistake to treat the 9/11 attacks organized by non-state terrorists as constituting a “war” rather than as crimes. We have well-proven criminal justice mechanisms to find, capture, and prosecute criminals in fair trials—even criminals who commit acts of terrorism.

Second, 9/11 was quickly understood to be a “new kind of war” in which the U.S. would have to “work the dark side.” The U.S. military has long-standing rules for treating prisoners of war, including the protections of the Geneva Conventions, but these were set aside. The “new kind of war” required new, improvised detention regimens for those suspected of terrorism. Gitmo is the poster child of what improvisation gained us—torture, disgrace, and dysfunction.

Third, Gitmo reminds us of the fragility of constitutional democracy—even one as sturdy as our own. In extremis, the rule of law is always at risk. Like many other

Our Mission

The mission of *Sojourners* magazine is to inspire hope and action by articulating the biblical call to racial and social justice, life and peace, and environmental stewardship.

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nations, when we faced a security crisis we lost confidence in the ability of our security and justice systems to protect us. Our leaders intentionally skirted the law and hid their actions behind the cloak of national security and state secrets. Congress rolled over and played dead, until it awakened long enough to block common sense solutions. The courts were generally deferential to the other branches.

Fourth, those who follow the Savior who taught us that "as you did it to the least of these, you did it to me" should have been especially vigilant about what was going on at Gitmo. But once again, most Christians acted on national fears rather

than discipleship commitments.

Gitmo should be closed in tandem with the approaching end of the war in Afghanistan—by 2014, if not before. This was the majority recommendation of our Detainee Task Force, which also offered specific steps to bring resolution of the various types of cases remaining. The end of the post-9/11 wars can and should mean the end of Gitmo. Christians should lead the way in pressing for its closing, by executive order if necessary. ■

David P. Gushee is the Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics at Mercer University in Macon, Ga.

By Mary Priniski, OP

Life, Dignity, and the Tragedy in Bangladesh

What Catholic social teaching says about those who make our clothes.

THE APRIL 24 collapse of a garment factory near Dhaka, Bangladesh, killed more than 1,125 people. That tragedy followed a fire that killed 112 last November at a factory making goods for companies including Walmart. According to the International Labor Rights Forum, at least 1,800 garment workers in Bangladesh have died in fires or other factory disasters since 2005. The collapse near Dhaka is the largest disaster in that time and the one that has gotten global attention.

As a Dominican Catholic sister and member of Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice, I approach reflection on such a disaster from the foundation of Catholic social teaching. Each of the social principles below relates to the situation in Bangladesh and challenges us to reflect on our own regard for those who provide our clothing.

■ Life and dignity of the human person.

Story after story of the people who work in the garment industry shows the lack of respect for workers. Long hours, few to no breaks, prevalent verbal, physical, and sexual abuse, and now the collapse of a factory—do we need any more proof that human life is held in so little regard? Many years ago, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin called for an understanding of "respect life" as inclusive of human life "from womb to tomb."

Our upholding of life must include working toward changing factory conditions so that a debacle such as Dhaka never happens again.

■ **Call to family, community, and participation.** According to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, 85 percent of garment workers in Bangladesh are women. Why do they stay with such inhumane and dangerous working conditions? Salaries of garment workers often support large extended families. The women who have taken on such responsibilities are deserving of our admiration for their commitment to the survival of their families. However, not only are they not welcome to participate in decisions affecting factory conditions, but doing so can threaten their jobs.

■ **Rights and responsibilities.** This principle is particularly challenging to those of us who are consumers of goods manufactured in the Third World. All people have the right

U.S. Gun Deaths Since Newtown
4,727
Source: Slate.com, as of June 1

From the Archives

August 1983

A Deadly 'Snowstorm'

ON MARCH 1, 1954, at 6:45 a.m., the U.S. government detonated a 15-megaton hydrogen bomb in the Bikini Atoll. Within a few hours, the ash-like radioactive fallout from the "Bravo" test explosion began to descend on the nearby inhabited atolls of Rongelap and Rongerik. An Air Force witness said the fallout resembled "a snowstorm in the middle of the Pacific."

A two-inch-deep layer of radioactive dust accumulated on Rongelap, contaminating its food supply and drinking water. Children playing in the powder experienced skin eruptions on their arms and faces. By the end of the day, the residents of Rongelap had begun to exhibit the symptoms of acute radiation exposure: burns, severe vomiting, diarrhea, and hair loss.

The islanders were not evacuated from Rongelap until two days after the blast. They and other Marshallese people have suffered the insidious long-term effects of radiation exposure because of the contamination of their land and the cumulative effects of radiation on their bodies. For example, the rate of stillbirths and miscarriages among Rongelap women who were exposed to the fallout rose to more than twice the rate in unexposed Marshallese women for the four years following the Bravo detonation. ...

More than 2,000 Marshallese people were contaminated with radiation, becoming unwilling laboratory specimens for the U.S. government's gruesome nuclear experiments. ■

Liane Rozzell was a Sojourners editorial assistant when this article appeared.



to life and the right to safety on the job, and our responsibility—as governments, owners, and consumers—is to support that.

■ **Option for the poor and vulnerable.** This preferential option for those who are poor and vulnerable calls first for awareness. From whom do we purchase our clothes? Who makes them? How are workers treated?

■ **The dignity of work and the rights of workers.** It is obvious in accounts of the disaster in Bangladesh that the dignity of the workers was not upheld. The right of free association in unions is discouraged in the strongest ways. The collapse, the many injuries at work, and workplace fires around the global South indicate how little the safety of workers is regarded.

■ **Care of God's creation.** Human mistreatment of the environment is morally bankrupt. The people who work in the garment industry are often there because they can no longer sustainably work the land. Our reliance on agribusiness with its consequent

contribution to climate change is only one indication of our lack of sustainability.

■ **Solidarity.** Solidarity with garment workers in the global South, and their solidarity with one another, challenges us all to creativity and imagination to produce concrete actions of support. Corporate actions such as boycotts of certain stores or products, stockholder resolutions for policy changes, legislative efforts in support of worker rights, and other actions that have yet to be imagined can make real differences in real peoples' lives.

The social teaching of our churches challenges us to conversion to a way of life where consumerism is not our ruling value. The disaster in Bangladesh is just one indication that we are a long way from a society in which we value both individual flourishing and the common good. ■

Mary Priniski, OP, is a member of the Dominican Sisters of Adrian and serves on the executive committee of Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice. She has been involved with worker rights issues for more than 30 years.

By Molly M. Gill

Untying the Hands of Justice

Mandatory minimum sentences are both irrational and unjust.

THE UNITED STATES has more than 2.3 million prisoners, a higher number than any other country. How did we become the world's leading jailer? One of the main culprits: Mandatory sentences.

Visiting those in prison and giving Christmas gifts to children of incarcerated parents are only two steps toward fulfilling Jesus' command to care for the "least of these" (Matthew 25). It's time for the church to get serious about criminal sentencing reform—particularly, the reform of mandatory minimum sentencing laws, which lock up so many people for so long with so little benefit to society.

The explosion in state and federal prison populations and costs began in the 1980s with the so-called war on drugs. Lengthy mandatory minimum prison sentences passed by lawmakers are the primary weapon in that "war." Judges have no choice but to apply these automatic, non-negotiable

sentences of five, 10, or 20 years or even life in prison without parole. Whether the punishment actually fits the crime or the offender, protects the public, or leads to rehabilitation is irrelevant.

The results are unsurprising: irrational sentences, \$80 billion annually in prison costs, and horrifically overcrowded prisons. States as varied as Georgia, New York, Delaware, South Carolina, California, and Michigan have confronted the reality of unsustainable prison budgets by repealing mandatory minimum sentences or creating "safety valve" exceptions that let judges go below the mandated punishment if the facts and circumstances warrant it. During this wave of reforms, crime has dropped to historic lows.

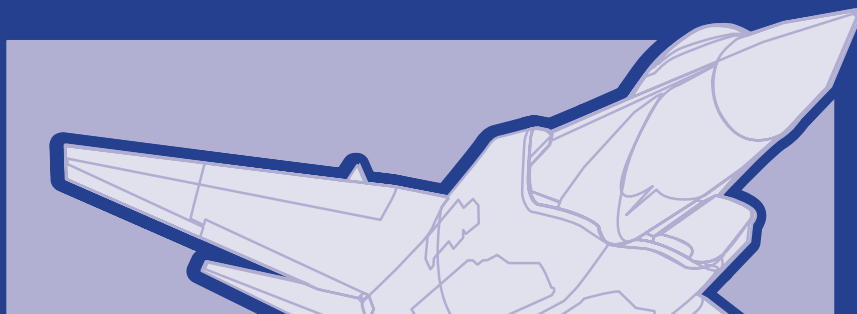
But Congress has not followed the example of these forward-thinking states. The federal prison system is operating at 140 percent of its capacity. Half of its prisoners

are nonviolent and low-level drug offenders; many would be better served with cost-effective drug treatment, more appropriate sentences, or even strict supervision in the community. Imprisoning them consumes a full quarter of the federal Justice Department's entire crime-fighting budget. Funds that could protect us with more cops on the street or better anti-terrorism tactics are instead spent on incarcerating for decades many people who aren't dangerous or violent.

The Justice Safety Valve Act of 2013, introduced by Sens. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) and Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), would allow judges to give offenders less prison time than the mandatory sentence if certain factors justify it. For example, a judge could give an offender a seven-year sentence instead of the 10-year mandatory sentence if the judge finds that doing so won't endanger the public or would avoid an absurd result (such as punishing a small-time drug seller as if he or she were a kingpin). Both the Left (the ACLU) and the Right (Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform) have endorsed this modest reform. The bill should muster bipartisan support: It's just common sense to permit courts to save our scarce prison resources for the most violent and hardened criminals.

Some churches and the National Association of Evangelicals are already supporting the bill and asking Congress to scale back mandatory minimum sentences. But too many Christians still endorse over-the-top sentences with "do the crime, do the time" or "eye for an eye" mantras. People who break the law deserve punishment, but the Bible limits it: It's an eye for an eye, not a leg for an eye or a life for an eye. Mandatory minimum sentences too often require judges to take far more than is due. Passing the Justice Safety Valve Act would allow judges to punish enough, but not too much. Christians should champion this first step in sentencing reform. Our duty to care for prisoners extends far beyond the prison gates, all the way to the ballot box and the halls of Congress. ■

Molly M. Gill is the government affairs counsel for Families Against Mandatory Minimums (www.famm.org).



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'COURAGE!

YOUR FAITH HAS MADE YOU WELL'

Is faith healing a sign that the Spirit is moving—or a response to economic pressure and a broken health-care system?

JASON COOPER LOOKS out at the audience gathered in Restoration Church and asks, "Is it God's will to heal?"

The former art school classroom, where the Pentecostal Dover, N.H., congregation meets, is nearly full, even though it is a Thursday evening in April. In addition to the 70 or so regular members who have come to hear Cooper preach, there are nearly a dozen visitors. One woman leans heavily on a cane. Another can't turn her head from side to side and needs neck surgery.

They are casualties of slow research and expensive health care. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, a non-profit health-care policy think tank, health expenditures have increased 10-fold in the past 30 years. Though some health-care increases can be attributed to longer life spans, the high costs of drugs, hospital stays, and doctor visits have been compounded in the wake of the recession.

A young woman tensely watches Cooper as if he might explode at any minute. No one knows exactly what he will do. The audience fidgets in response to his question. Cooper, with his soul patch, slick black haircut, white button-down shirt, and stone-washed jeans, looks a little like a Vegas magician.

But Cooper is a traveling faith healer.

Restoration Church is a member of the Assemblies of God, a Pentecostal denomination that believes faith healing is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit available to all Christians. It is a modern church of about 170 members, with a worship team that includes electric guitar players, a bassist, and



Jason Cooper at a healing service at Restoration Church, in Dover, N.H.

Jason Cooper Ministries

Churches that embraced an experience of the supernatural, such as Pentecostal sects, used to be on the fringe.

a drummer. Its logo, a stenciled yellow “R” on a black background, is as trendy as an Apple icon.

Restoration embraces a tradition of faith healing that goes back to the time of Christ. As recounted in the gospels, Jesus healed many people in various ways. In Matthew, a woman “who had suffered from severe bleeding for 12 years” (9:20) touches his cloak.

Jesus tells her, “Courage, my daughter! Your faith has made you well” (9:22), and she is healed. In John 9:6-7, Jesus spat on the ground, made mud with saliva, and spread the mud on the man’s eyes to cure him of blindness. In Luke 8:49-56, he raises the daughter of a man named Jairus from the dead.

Faith healing is a confusing phenomenon to many, including members of churches that practice it. The Bible does not paint a clear portrait of how it works. The only commonality among most biblical accounts of divine healing is Jesus, and even his role is unclear. Does healing require touching Jesus or something that belonged to him? Does it require asking him for healing?

Churches across America offer different answers to these questions. For example, many Catholics believe that touching a holy relic or visiting a saint’s grave can bring healing, whereas mainstream Protestant churches assert that healing is possible through prayer and faith. Evangelical and Pentecostal churches differ in what they believe about healing, but many, including Restoration, affirm that divine healing is possible by

using the power of Jesus or the Holy Spirit. A few, such as the Assemblies of God and Vineyard Churches, include divine healing as part of their doctrine.

After Cooper finishes preaching, he stands in front of the stage where the worship team plays and looks out at the crowd. In a peaceful tone, he says, “Now let’s just watch God do what he does.” The visitors walk or hobble forward and stand in front of the stage, waiting eagerly for Cooper to pray over them.

DESPITE ITS centrality to early Christianity, faith healing didn’t appear on the U.S. national stage until the 20th century. Folk healers practiced all over the country, but they worked locally. The Pentecostal movement changed this.

In 1901, Agnes Ozman, a member of evangelist Charles Parham’s church in Topeka, Kan., became known as “the first to speak in tongues.” This sparked a revival centered on the gifts of the Spirit, including faith healing. William Seymour, a black preacher, eventually studied under Parham. In 1906 Seymour traveled to Los Angeles and established the Apostolic Faith Mission in a former church on Azusa Street, beginning a three-year-long revival in the city that led to the birth of dozens of Pentecostal churches. Seymour preached what Pentecostal scholar Cecil M. Robeck Jr. describes as a “living, practical Christianity.”

This is the kind of Christianity that is taught today at Restoration: alive, active, vibrant. Pastor Nate Gagne promised his church that they would see great miracles that evening.

Cooper moves down the line, laying hands, closing his eyes, and praying over each person who stands before him. The congregation seems to be holding its breath, waiting for something to happen, trying to discern if something already has.

Mainstream Protestants are generally wary of placing one person’s abilities over another’s. Yet the comfort that people appear to have at Restoration with faith healers and otherworldly experiences can be attributed in part to the influence of African-American folk healing. In this tradition, the faith healer is a crucial figure who orchestrates the relationships between the spiritual and physical aspects of life believed to be interconnected. Respect for faith healers may have been a forerunner of the celebrity status that faith healers and evangelists—such as Aimee Semple McPherson, Smith



A participant at an Oral Roberts crusade in 1962.

Wigglesworth, John G. Lake, William Branham, Kathryn Kuhlman, Oral Roberts, and Pat Robertson—achieved in the 20th century. It is similar to the respect that some people give healers such as Cooper today.

The Restoration congregation continues to follow each of Cooper's attempts at healing. The healings are not perfect, though there are moments of hope. A deaf woman suddenly seems able to hear Cooper speaking. Or is he just talking more loudly?

Some people have begun to speak in tongues; a woman sitting in the front row murmurs "shalakatai." Pastor Gagne speaks in tongues as Cooper continues to pray over members and visitors.

At last, Cooper reaches Michelle, the woman who needs neck surgery. He prays over her once.

"Better?" he asks.

"My back feels a little better, but my neck still hurts." She tries to turn it to either side. It doesn't work.

Cooper asks up two random women near the stage: Debbie, the mother of the worship team leader and Laureen, one of the oldest women in this mostly under-40 church. They walk up to pray over Michelle. At first, Cooper stands behind them to supervise. Then he walks away.

"Take authority," he says. He has told the congregation that it is not about him; he doesn't want to be a celebrity. The glory belongs to God, who can work through anyone.

"Lord, we take *authority* over this neck," Laureen states. "Make it the way *you* made it." Her tone is firm, as if she is admonishing God.

Debbie and Laureen are confident that God can step in, right now, and heal Michelle's neck.

CHURCHES THAT embraced an experience of the supernatural, such as Pentecostal sects, used to be on the fringe. Then the Christian hippies, known as Jesus People, arrived.

The Jesus People movement sprang up in California in the late 1960s from small, scattered experiments, such as a Baptist pastor and a few congregants renting a storefront in San Francisco and setting up a "Living Room" with scripture verses and psychedelic suns painted on the wall. They supplied

free coffee and snacks. Thousands of hippies passed through.

Most mainstream Christians at the time believed Jesus' miracles to be limited to his lifetime and the early church, but the Jesus People insisted that Jesus was still a supernatural force. The Jesus People acted as if they were living in Jesus' time. They read the Bible together without a pastor, preached outside, and baptized in the ocean. Why couldn't they experience the miracles Jesus performed?

Soon mainstream churches began changing their old habits to appeal to this new wave of Christians. Some pastors invited rock bands into their churches and stopped preaching in suits. In *When God Talks Back*, anthropologist T.M. Luhrmann discusses how John Wimber, a founding leader of the Jesus People-filled Vineyard Church movement, started praying for people to be healed because he "wondered why the miracles described in the scriptures no longer took place."

The Jesus People movement peaked in the late '70s, but its influence and principles are visible in many evangelical churches today. Before the Jesus People, evangelicals didn't get tattoos, practice speaking in tongues, or preach in cargo pants. Nor did they heal people or talk about Jesus as if he were a superhero.

But Debbie and Laureen are comfortable asking God to perform neck surgery on Michelle. Debbie runs her hand up and down Michelle's spine, even though Michelle told Cooper it felt better. She taps the vertebrae and says, "Line up, line up, line up." It's as if Debbie is speaking commands to Siri on the iPhone. She expects results.

Suddenly, Michelle, whose eyes are already closed, appears to lose consciousness. Her face goes slack, and her body tips back and to the side. Pastor Gagne runs over to support her. The women praying over her don't bat an eye. They keep praying.

ISSUES AROUND FAITH healing are even more poignant in times of national confusion about health and health care.

In *Prescribing Faith*, Claire Badaracco writes that people feared "the unreliability and the power of American medicine" in the 1800s. At the turn of the century, after this "era of fads and quackery," pastors began healing in church. Then, in the

1960s and '70s, people began looking outside the mainstream for solutions to many societal woes, including sickness, and divine healing was revived again. Now economic pressure appears to be forcing people to seek alternatives to mainstream health care once more.

The *American Journal of Medicine* reports that almost two-thirds of all bankruptcy cases were the result of illness and medical debt in 2007, up nearly 50 percent from 2001. The recession was the straw that broke the back of the straining U.S. health-care system. Without jobs, the need for an option outside of employer-provided health insurance plans became imperative. This puts members of Restoration Church in the middle of the debate in the shift from private to government-supported health care.

Nearly everyone agrees that a change needed to happen, but not everyone supports the measures taken by the Affordable Care Act, which some believe spells the rise of "big government." Pastor Gagne wishes the government could cover everyone, though he worries that taxpayers can't afford it. The cost of private insurance—a typical plan with high deductibles runs more than \$1,700 per year for one person and about \$400 a month for a family of four in New Hampshire—prevented many from obtaining plans in the marketplace. Pastor Gagne doesn't have health insurance for himself and his wife. His kids are covered by state plans; to pay for his family of five would be prohibitively expensive on a pastor's income.

Cooper also worries that government-run health care blurs the line between human institutions and God. If our government gets too big, he asks, how can you be sure you're worshiping the Creator and not something created? Wouldn't it be easier if you could opt out of the whole system and get healed at church?

Suddenly, Michelle opens her eyes and looks around, disoriented. The women stop praying and lean back, smiling at her, their hands still protectively on her back and shoulders. Michelle turns her head slowly from side to side and a smile spreads on her face. Her eyes grow bright and she laughs.

Cooper looks over and grins. ■

Alicia de los Reyes is a freelance writer based in Seattle.

BY BOB SMJETANA

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

Memphis' Congregational Health Network has become a model for how hospitals and faith communities can work together.



THE CONGREGATIONAL HEALTH NETWORK

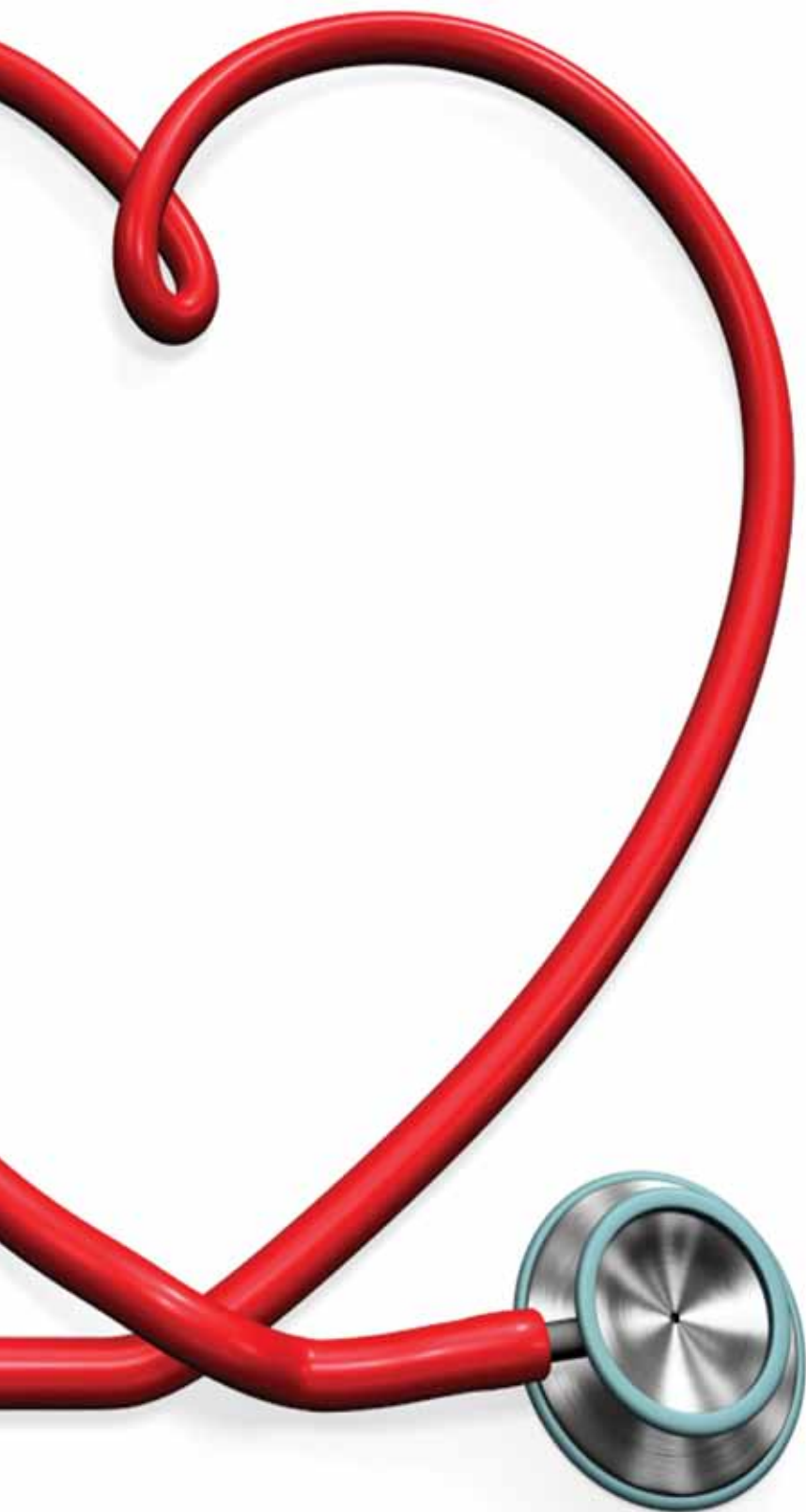
began with a simple request from the largest hospital network in Memphis to a group of local pastors: Help us take better care of your people.

Ten years ago, officials at Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare were worried that chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, and obesity were threatening the well-being of local residents and sending health-care costs through the roof.

“People in their 20s were coming to the emergency room in end-stage renal failure,” said Rev. Bobby Baker, a Baptist pastor and director of faith and community partnerships at Methodist Healthcare. “That person is going to be using critical care resources for the rest of their life.”

Hospital officials knew something had to change. They wanted to focus on preventive health care—getting people in to see their doctor long before they were in a crisis. So in Memphis, a city where faith remains a powerful force and more than 60 percent of the population has ties to a religious group, they turned to churches for help. It started small, with a group of about a dozen pastors at churches near Methodist South hospital, in the city's Whitehaven neighborhood. Those pastors recruited church members to serve as liaisons to the hospital, while the

Digital Vision



hospital assigned staff to work with churches. That small pilot, first called the Church Health Network, began in 2004.

Two years later, Methodist CEO and president Gary Shorb, along with Rev. Gary Gunderson, the former senior vice president for Methodist's faith and health division, decided to expand the project system wide. That was the only way to make a significant impact on health outcomes, said Baker. "The thought was that it can't be a pilot, it can't be a research project—it really has to be broad reaching," he said.

Today, the Congregational Health Network (CHN) has become a model for how hospitals and faith communities

More than 500 congregations, including Baptist, Methodist, and Church of God in Christ, have signed up to be part of the health network.

can work together. More than 500 congregations, including Baptist, Methodist, and Church of God in Christ, have signed up to be part of CHN, representing more than 15,000 patients. Eleven hospital employees, known as navigators, work with congregational volunteers, known as liaisons, to help congregation members make their way through the health-care system. The network offers weekly classes ranging from "Caring for the Dying" to "Mental Health First Aid." More than 2,000 people have taken at least one class.

All of this has helped congregations such as Oak Grove Baptist Church in the Riverview-Kansas neighborhood of Memphis keep their people healthier, said Rev. James Kendrick. It begins with preventive measures, such as healthy eating, and goes all the way through to aftercare. Church members who leave the hospital are tied into a support network when they get back home. Kendrick was one of the first pastors to sign on with the network. He said that like most people, his congregation's members hate going to the hospital. But being part of CHN has made Methodist seem like a more welcoming place. In the past, he said, the hospital seemed like an impersonal institution. That's no longer the case. Church members have met doctors and other hospital staff while taking classes through the network.

"Methodist is not just a *place* anymore," Kendrick said. "It has a face and name."

Hospital president Shorb and board members also held one of their meetings at Oak Grove Baptist, which is in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Memphis. It's a community where abandoned buildings and vacant lots are commonplace, where a nearby store sells beer and junk food but no fresh

produce, and where there are no primary-care doctors. By coming out to his neighborhood, Kendrick said that hospital officials got a better view of the context people live in.

Methodist hopes to get people to go see their primary-care doctor early on, instead of going to the emergency room. But that's made more difficult if there's no doctor in your community, said Kendrick. He believes hospital officials now have a better understanding of how other factors, such as crime, unemployment, and lack of access to good food, also affect a community's well-being.

"Those are all health issues," he said.

The input of pastors such as Kendrick has been an essential part of the success of the CHN. He was one of a dozen or so pastors who helped shape the program from the beginning. Back in 2006, Baker, who was then a hospital chaplain, convinced Kendrick



Bobby Baker, left, and Gary Gunderson are two Memphis pastors who helped energize the creation of the Congregational Health Network.

in the community. In a sense that made them bilingual, able to speak both the language of pastors and that of hospital administrators. They could also draw on their relationships with other ministers to build CHN. Those pastors trusted Baker and other chaplains and so were willing to give the hospital a chance.

"We called it trust by proxy," said Cutts.

In the early days, said Baker, trust was all

Being part of the church network has made the hospital seem like a more welcoming place.

and some of his other pastor friends to join what was known as the covenant committee. The idea was to have pastors serve as a kind of steering committee for planning the network. They drafted the covenant agreement that every church signs when they join CHN. They also designed some of the early programs, said Baker. That way pastors had ownership in the network.

"THE REAL POWER of the partnership is trust," said Baker. "The first thing we did was let pastors in on the design of the program. We didn't just put it in a can and roll it out to them, and say, 'Hey, go do this in your congregation.'"

Teresa Cutts, director of research at Methodist's Center of Excellence for Faith and Health, said that the network was built on trust and friendship. Baker and a number of the other hospital chaplains were bivocational ministers. That means while they had a day job at the hospital to pay the bills, they also served as pastors to congregations out

he could offer. "In the beginning, all we had was a promise," he said. "We did not have a program. We went to pastors and said, 'This is what we are going to do—will you help us do it?' And we have been able to live up to what we promised. I am very thankful to God for that."

Hospital officials made one other important decision early. That was to use electronic medical records to track all the patients who register with the Congregational Health Network. Every church or house of worship in the network gets a card with the patient's name on it and the name of their church. When they are admitted to the hospital, the network navigators use the information on the card to let a pastor know that their church member might need a pastoral visit. Those navigators also fill out a spiritual care plan form, which lists practical information—such as if the patient needs a meal dropped off or a ride to a follow-up visit, or someone to pick up their medication. The card also lets the hospital track the health

outcomes of church members.

So far, CHN seems to have a positive effect. In fact, being part of a network church just might save your life. For a research project, Cutts compared 2,281 participants in the network with 4,522 nonparticipants who were not part of the network from 2008 to 2011. Mortality in the network went down by half, meaning that those who were part of a network church were less likely to die during that time frame. "We like that statistic," said Cutts.

Network members also averaged about \$8,700 less in hospital costs. And patients with serious illnesses such as congestive heart failure were far less likely to have to be readmitted after leaving the hospital. That's good for everyone, said Cutts. "If we can lengthen the span that they are out of the hospital, it is better for the patient and it is better for the hospital," she said. Those statistics are even more impressive given that most of the network members are older and many were already patients of the hospital.

A report for the Health Systems Learning Group, a collection of 40 health systems around the country, touts the experience of a patient known as "George." George, who is in his 80s, has been in the program for two years. The year before he signed up, he'd been admitted to the hospital eight times for congestive heart failure. After signing up, his church's liaison helped him plan his diet, get his medication, and watch for signs such as weight gain that could show his condition was worsening. "In the first year of CHN community caregiving, George's admits decreased in half to only four admits, and in this past year, George has only been to the hospital one time," said the report.

Early returns show that not only is patient health improving, but also the cost of caring for them has gone down. One report, which looked at some of the first patients in the network, cited a savings of about \$4 million. That's enough for the hospital to keep funding the program, which costs between \$750,000 and \$1 million each year. "This is an investment in our future," said Methodist CEO Shorb. "It's telling us what could work and what doesn't work."

Rev. Eric Winston of Mt. Zion Baptist Church said that one reason the network works is that the hospital and the churches have formed a safety net for people when they get sick.

CHN photos

New from Church Publishing Inc.

Church members can keep an eye on one another, and they know who to call at the hospital when a member has a health crisis. He points to the Comprehensive Sickle Cell Center at Methodist as an example. A longtime member of his church named Keisha was diagnosed with sickle cell as a young girl. The condition can cause excruciating pain when it flares up. Winston said that the first time he visited Keisha in the hospital, all she could say was, "Pastor, just pray."

Children with sickle cell in Memphis get great care at St. Jude Hospital, but that falls off when they become adults, said Winston.

Methodist started a new sickle cell center to help those adult patients. They are able to register with the center, and if their condition flares up, they're able to get immediate treatment. That's important because treating a crisis early means patients can avoid a hospital stay. "It's the difference between six hours in the center or seven days in the hospital," he said.

LAST FALL, WINSTON organized an annual fundraiser for the sickle cell center called the Clergy Chase. It's a 5k run at Overton Park in Memphis, where the pastors start running and church members chase them down, said Winston. The run not only raised funds for the center but it also helped get the word out to pastors about the center, so they can tell their church members who might be affected by the disease.

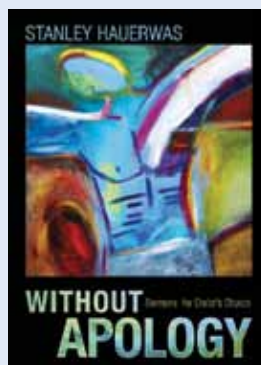
One side benefit is that the run helps pastors get in better shape. When they sign the covenant to join the network, pastors promise to model good health to their parishioners. Winston said that he's lost 20 pounds in recent years, mainly by better diet. "I am trying not to dig a grave with my teeth," he said.

Winston, who's also a professor at Memphis Theological Seminary, said the network shows that the hospital understands the change in U.S. church culture. In the past, churches were tied to institutions such as hospitals along denominational lines. Now denominations are declining, and churches work together out of friendship and a shared sense of mission. Church members aren't just getting medical care as part of the network. They are also joining a kind of family. "That's what you have to have today—community," said Winston. "Because that is what we don't have much of."

That community is a two-way street. Churches benefit from the network, but they also help the hospital. As part of the network, the hospital started a faith and health committee on its board and invited pastors such as Winston to serve on it. They get access to the hospital's financial reports, like all other board members, and a vote in how the hospital is run.

"That showed the church community that the hospital was genuinely concerned and let us have voice—where we never had voice before," he said. "That really showed that they care." ■

Bob Smietana is a religion writer for *The Tennessean* in Nashville.



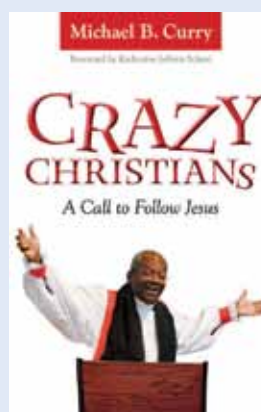
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Crazy Christians

A Call to Follow Jesus

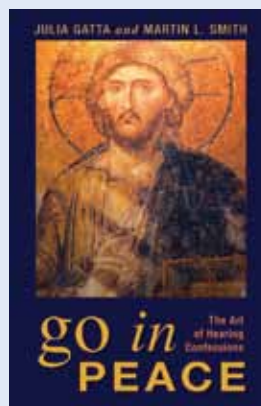
MICHAEL B. CURRY

FOREWORD BY KATHERINE JEFFERTS SCHORI

"We need some Christians who are as crazy as the Lord. Crazy enough to love like Jesus, to give like Jesus, to forgive like Jesus, to do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with God—like Jesus. Crazy enough to dare to change the world from the nightmare it often is into something close to the dream that God dreams for it. And for those who would follow him, those who would be his disciples, those who would live as and be the people of the Way? It might come as a shock, but they are called to craziness."

—from Bishop Curry's "Crazy Christians" address to the 2012 General Convention of the Episcopal Church in Indianapolis

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MOURNING FOR THE EARTH

**To confront climate change,
we may need to first deal with our grief.**

The most precious place on Earth for me is a camp on a lake in the Adirondack Mountains of New York. During the next century, climate change will chase northward things that I cherish. Spruce, tamaracks, sugar maples, balsam fir, moose, mink, and loons will no longer grace the shores and waters of that lake. Like most people in northern climes, I see the changes happening already. I have to fight hard against despair, for my personal losses, yes, but also for the universality and injustice of the calamity, which already affects so many of the poor and innocent.

WHY IS IT so hard for people to respond effectively to the reality of climate change?

Changing people's minds—with facts, tables, and predictions—has proven extremely difficult. Even showing people the miraculous beauty of the planet alongside the predicted losses is not working. Guilt, anxiety, and anger can be motivating forces, but they have debilitating side effects: They are all soul-destroying.

So I wonder about our hearts. Have we ignored our emotional and spiritual connections to the planet? Could the noise swirling around climate change—science, politics, media blitzes, as well as the weather disasters themselves—drown out the voice of a loss so profound that it rests unnamed in our souls? Could our breaking hearts be part of the reason we are immobilized?

In the 1960s, Rachel Carson's image of a "silent spring" due to the proliferation of pesticides was as heartrending as it was controversial. Carson was ridiculed, her predictions dismissed. The corporate world paid millions to have her silenced. But eventually the love of bird songs won out. People read Carson's book, grieved at the prospect of a silent spring, spoke up, and insisted the chemical-company-supported politicians ban DDT.

Today, the iconic images surrounding climate change are different: the human mother watching her child slowly die from malnutrition, the





Part of our grief may be an underlying feeling that some part of God is being lost through the changing climate.



majestic polar bear mother with her cub on a shrinking ice flow, or the head of state of a small island nation pleading with delegates at yet another international conference to save his homeland from disappearing under the rising ocean waves.

These things are happening right now and, sadly, most often to those innocent of the causes.

Earth: an incarnation of God's love rendered in soil, water, atmosphere, and living beings. It is a gift we must, by all rational, emotional, ethical, and spiritual measures, protect and preserve for future generations. It is a gift to all of us—not just some. We are compelled as Christians to ensure that the “least of these” who are most vulnerable are protected from the ravages of a changing climate. So if we are to truly love our neighbors as ourselves, we must put ourselves in their shoes and imagine watching our own malnourished child die or the place most precious to us disappear beneath the ocean waves.

We rarely talk about loss, grief, and climate change. The losses come in many forms. Clearly the victims of weather-related events, such as Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, grieve deeply when faced with the immediate losses of homes and neighborhoods. People drawing their livelihoods from the land and sea notice changes that will eventually eliminate that way of life for them, at least in that place. Some of us may have chosen changes in lifestyles to reduce our carbon footprint; it is something we do out of love, but there can still be accompanying feelings of loss.

For the many who feel God's incarnate presence in nature, part of our grief may be an underlying feeling that some part of God is being lost through the changing climate.

Granted, for many other people, the reality of actual climate change remains distant—somewhere else, sometime later. The responses proposed—recycle more, drive less, watch your personal carbon footprint—seem so ridiculously small, futile, and incongruous that they are simply dismissed: Why bother? Let me just live my life, right now, the way I always have.

But I wonder if there could be a hidden sense of loss at work even beneath this self-absorbed, preoccupied exterior.

Decades ago, Joanna Macy spoke about the threat of nuclear annihilation. Her words are tragically appropriate to the reality of climate change today: “[E]very generation throughout history lived with the tacit certainty that there would be generations to follow ... that its children and children's children would walk the same Earth, under the same sky. ... That certainty is now lost to us. ... That loss, unmeasured and immeasurable, is the pivotal psychological reality of our time.”

Indeed, we are the first generation of people who now know that our children's grandchildren will indeed not walk the same Earth. They will live on a planet so less hospitable and predictable than it is now that it is unimaginable to us.

Perhaps we are beginning to realize the opposite of Bill McKibben's suggestion about the “the end of nature” from his book of that

name. Maybe nature is ending us. At the pinnacle of our hubris, we find we are not above the intricacies and workings of the planetary system. The primary loss, then, is of our accustomed relationship to the planet. The associated grief is both deeply personal and hauntingly universal. It is a frightening, existential grief that leads to a profound sense of sadness and insecurity, perhaps not unlike the grief felt by the disciples after the death of Jesus.

Climate change is one of the most profound experiences faced by humans, as revolutionary a prospect as when Copernicus suggested that the Earth moves around the sun. As then, the change in our self-image cannot help but tie intimately into our thoughts about God. Some people of faith may assume that God's second coming will change everything and alleviate the pain and grief from climate change. Others are unsure of how, but are certain that God will not "let" the human species die. Many of us, though, accept that, as Pogo said, "We have met the enemy and he is us": Humans are capable of "free-willing" ourselves into oblivion. That God will remain with us until the end is still a given, but as we are told in Genesis, we are not the only act of creation seen as "good." There are no guarantees of human existence on Earth beyond our folly.

It is a world turned upside down.

So, I wonder, could it be that one root cause of inaction in the face of climate change might be immobilization from caring not too little, but too much? How do we deal with the sadness of all this?

Therapists and pastors have long recognized that grief is a process, not a state of being. It is to be lived through, not cured. Using the familiar stages of grief defined by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, climate scientist Dr. Steve Running perceptively describes five stages of "climate grief":

- **Denial** that the Earth is warming and that the warming is caused by humans.
- **Anger** that anyone should suggest that their lifestyle be changed.
- **Bargaining** by suggesting that "it won't be all bad" (for instance, growing seasons will be extended in some places).
- **Depression** at the almost unimaginable reality of the problem.

■ **Acceptance**, enabling active exploration of solutions.

Faith communities are often turned to in moments of grief. Could churches, synagogues, and mosques help us work through our grief so we can embrace the radical changes that must be made?

William Worden, author of *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*, suggests four "tasks of mourning." Grieving over our losses due to climate change might look like this:

Accept the loss of our previous relationship to the planet. Denial of climate change is yesterday's news, but we still need to understand the meaning of the loss. Anthropogenic climate change harms the biosphere, threatens modern civilization, and is already especially harmful to the poor. But what does that really look like? Faith communities near those most affected (the poor, climate refugees, immigrants) can help articulate the stark realities, as well as what it might mean to more privileged people.

Work through to the pain of our grief. This is the most salient task if we hope to break through the present inertia. Joanna Macy reminds us how the journey through the "dark night of the soul" has always been recognized by traditional paths as sacred. Moving deliberately through the darkest places will help people emerge with empathy and empowerment as they realize their own capacity to change.

Congregations can speak, write, draw, dance, sing, and cry in grief over what is happening and will continue to happen. We can share our fears and anticipated losses and validate each other's grief. We can draw upon the laments of the psalms in our services, actively mourn the changes already here and those to come. We can actively express our anger at God. And we know about rituals surrounding loss; could they not be effectively used here as well?

Adapt to an environment in which our traditional relationship with the Earth has been replaced with a new one. Everything must change, from how we dry our clothes to the underlying assumptions about our economy. Faith communities can provide support to people trying to adjust, trying to make a difference.



**I FEED
COMMUNITIES
IN NEED,
DIG WELLS,
PROVIDE
DISASTER
RELIEF AND
TEACH PEOPLE
TO READ.**

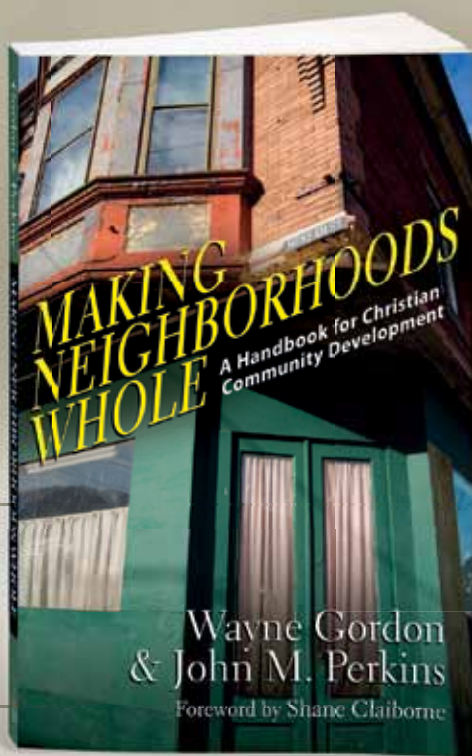
**AND I
CAN EVEN
BRING
THE KIDS.**



Photo: Arndt Bräuer

A LEGACY of WISDOM

Civil rights leader JOHN PERKINS and CCDA president WAYNE GORDON revisit the founding principles of the Christian Community Development Association with an eye toward the priorities of today's urban ministry leaders. Featuring a lifetime of wisdom and profiles of thriving ministries, *Making Neighborhoods Whole* is an essential handbook for anyone interested in Christian community development.




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“No one understands better how to transform neglected communities than John Perkins and Wayne Gordon.”

—BOB LUPTON, founder and president of FCS Urban Ministries, Atlanta, GA

Much of the gospel is about healing and justice between human beings. We need to learn to adapt that to encompass the larger ecological community of which we are a part. Although they might not call it “God,” there are many non-churchgoers in the surrounding community who experience the sacred in the natural world that could share in this dialogue.

Emotionally relocate preconceived notions of control and dominance of the planet and move on. We need to relegate our old Earth/human relationship to the past and move into a new community of being.

This seems overwhelming, but in a sense it has happened before. Jesus challenged people to change their allegiances, world-views, and lifestyles, much as we are being

Could churches and synagogues help us work through our grief so we can embrace the radical changes that must be made?

challenged today by the reality of climate change. He suggested an entirely new community, bonded together by love. “This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for one another” (John 13:35). Only after his death did his followers realize that this new community of love had the power to break through their grief, enabling them to finally move onward in hope.

Instead of guilt, fear, and depression, can we face our profound loss, talk about it, acknowledge our grief, and move forward within this new community? Can we dry our tears and embrace a new relationship with Earth infused with wonder, reverence for all life, and gratitude to God for remaining with us though the perils of what we must face?

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You are not obligated to complete the work. But neither are you free to abandon it.

—from the Talmud, attributed ■

Katharine M. Preston is an ecumenical lay preacher and writer, concentrating on issues of social justice and climate change.



Hot Dogs for Peace

WHEN I WAS growing up in the western suburbs of Chicago, I felt so far outside of the inner circle of cool kids that I didn't even know where the circle was. So you can imagine my delight when I got an invitation to David's birthday party. David was in the outer part of the inner circle, which meant I was heading in the right direction.

A couple days before the party, my mom took a closer look at the invitation and noticed that it said

I felt the horror of a kid caught in a grade school coolness competition.

David's parents would be making hot dogs for lunch. As she wasn't sure whether the hot dogs were pork or beef, and as we were Muslims who don't eat pork, she informed me that she'd be giving me all-beef franks to take from home with a note to David's mom asking her to fry them up in a separate pan.

Of course, this horrified me, the kind of horror that only a kid caught up in the jungle of grade school coolness competition can feel. I remember standing in the living room, staring at my mom, and thinking to myself: "First, you named me Eboo."

The day of the party rolled

around and, dutiful Indian-Muslim child that I was, I accepted the little plastic baggie with two beef hot dogs that my mom handed me, allowed her to put me in nice slacks and a collared shirt, and went off to the party. When lunchtime came, I snuck into the kitchen to make my request of David's parents. Imagine my surprise when I noticed another kid in the kitchen. He wore a collared shirt and nice slacks and also held a plastic baggie with two hot dogs.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"My name is Chaim," he said. "My mom sent me with my own hot dogs."

I was like, "You and me, we are going to be friends."

Chaim was the first Jew I ever met.

Think for a moment on the hopeful possibilities illustrated in this simple story from a suburban childhood. We are barraged with the opposite; we relentlessly hear stories in which Jews and Muslims are saying, "You are my enemy." What was it about that encounter that made Chaim and me friends? How can we multiply that a million-fold?

I spend a lot of time thinking about these questions in my role as founder

and president of Interfaith Youth Core. The mission of the organization is to make respect, positive relationships, and active cooperation between people from different religions a social norm. I am increasingly convinced that has everything to do with the nature of the spaces in which people encounter one another, and whether those spaces bring out people's divisions or their commonalities.

If you are thinking to yourself, "We should get more Christians to invite Jews and Muslims to their birthday parties and make them bring their own hot dogs," I'm all for it. But it's only one way to accomplish a deeper principle: How do we carve out spaces where people from different backgrounds feel that they have something deep and profound in common, that they have a stake in each other's success? Something visceral, like two outcast kids at a birthday party sent by their moms with their own hot dogs. Something sacred, like a world in which people who are different seek friendship, not domination. ■



Eboo Patel, founder of the Interfaith Youth Core, writes about social justice from his perspective as a Muslim American of Indian heritage.



THE SONG REMAINS

After more than two decades of defiant work for peace, Kathy Kelly continues to move others to love and action.

THE FONDEST MEMORIES I have of Kathy Kelly are of her singing. It's safe to say that her three nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize were not for her voice, which is sometimes sweet but often a touch out of key. At times I've imagined her feeling briefly self-conscious about this, but that passes. The song remains, and I am again reminded of just how deeply this woman can move me. Reuters

In spring 1999, in a small banquet room at Georgetown University, I first heard Kelly sing and speak about the suffering in Iraq. A crowd of about 200 people had gathered to hear about her work. She had been to Iraq dozens of times to put a human face on the conflict there and to defy the drastic financial and trade embargo that the U.N. Security Council had imposed shortly after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

She briefly went over the statistics—the deep poverty, the lack of medicines, the estimated half-million children who had died, many due to the U.N. sanctions, enforced in part by a U.S.-led blockade—but she quickly moved on. Statistics weren't her strength.

Instead she spoke from the heart. Kelly talked about the ordinary Iraqis she had met: the worn women who served her tea and biscuits they could barely afford, the countless kids in threadbare hand-me-downs who ran after her merrily in the street, the tired doctors who broke down crying as they remembered all the children they had lost, the stone-faced parents who accepted her condolences because they didn't know what else to do.

She also told the story of Zayna, a 7-month-old baby girl who died of malnutrition shortly after Kelly visited her in the hospital.

Then she started singing “We Shall Overcome” in Arabic, after telling the crowd how her friend Sattar, an Iraqi engineer turned taxi driver, had spent hours sitting with her in Baghdad, patiently translating the lyrics into Arabic and teaching them to her.

“If we can realize that the world's liberation begins within troubled hearts, then we may yet find peace.”

Left: Catholic activist Kathy Kelly speaks about her experience promoting Middle East peace. Background: U.S. soldiers during the Gulf war.



In 2000, the American Friends Service Committee nominated Kelly for the Nobel Peace Prize as “an expression of the importance of the individuals who transform a personal commitment to peace into visible and effective action.”

Right: Kelly joins Pakistani refugees who fled attacks in the Swat Valley in 2009.

I felt completely ridiculous listening to her singing words to a song I imagined had no cultural relevance to Iraqis. Noticing people in the audience crying, I silently mocked them for being so sentimental. Then I realized that I, too, was crying.

Like many in the room that day, I was already aware of the crisis. Like others, I was already reasonably outraged. But intellect is not enough. The ultimate failure of reason is that it alone cannot break through a distant heart, and you have to break hearts if you're going to move people to take action.

KELLY FIRST STARTED singing in the choir of her family's church during the tumultuous years of the '50s and '60s. The third of six children, she was raised in a working-class Catholic home in Chicago's Garfield Ridge neighborhood. Those times had a deep effect on her.

“There were plenty of heroes and heroines to look up to during my teen years,” she says, “when Martin Luther King's brave efforts in Chicago were denounced by my relatives and neighbors, and Daniel Berrigan's flashy wit and smile lit up our imaginations about creative subversion.

“I was fairly sure that I'd grow up to join the nuns. Nuns showed no interest in acquiring personal wealth, and they seemed happy about looking after us. I didn't become one of the nuns, but I'm surely cheering for them now.”

In the '70s, Kelly earned a master's degree in religious education from Chicago Theological Seminary and started teaching at St. Ignatius College Prep, where she sometimes presented articles to her students from a range of radical sources, including essays by Karl Meyer—a pacifist, member

of the Catholic Worker movement, and war tax resister whom she later married in 1982. Although they divorced in 1994, they remain close friends.

“I think fatalism trumped imaginative creativity during my late teens and early adulthood,” she says. “Meeting Karl made a huge difference in my life. Karl's radicalism easily made sense to me and caught me at a time when I could rely on both him and a community of friends for ‘backup.’”

Kelly started volunteering at a local soup kitchen, where she began lifelong friendships with other Chicago activists, including Roy Bourgeois. A Catholic priest and former naval officer, Bourgeois later founded SOA Watch, which works to expose the massacres and human rights abuses committed by graduates of the U.S. military-run School of the Americas (aka WHINSEC) in Fort Benning, Ga.

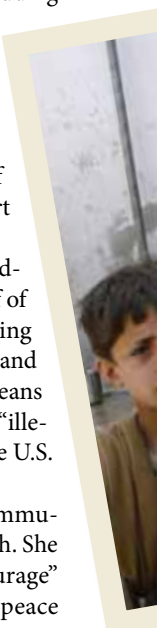
In 1980, Kelly stopped paying federal income taxes because almost half of those taxes fund the military. Protesting trade sanctions against Nicaragua, she and Meyer smuggled Nicaraguan coffee beans into the U.S. and used them to serve “illegal” coffee in the Chicago office of the U.S. district attorney.

Nonviolent direct action and community remain at the center of Kelly's faith. She likes to say that we can all “catch courage” from one another: the courage to do peace work, to make ourselves vulnerable not only to violence but to ridicule and sometimes loneliness as well, and the courage to keep on working even when we can't know what the end results of our work will be.

For Kelly, the most hopeful lessons of Jesus' life are his radical love and his call for courage. Although the injunction in Romans 13 to submit to worldly authorities has often been used to discourage civil disobedience, she points out that Romans 13:8 teaches us, “Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.”

“The love command trumps other commands whenever lawmakers usurp their own authority by prescribing or upholding the devaluation and destruction of life,” says Kelly, “and Jesus consistently tells his friends and followers not to be afraid. When the disciples are petrified that a storm will overturn

Counterpunch



their boat and quite likely fearing the cost of being associated with Jesus and the radical love he practiced and preached, Jesus walks on the sea and says, 'Don't be afraid' [Matthew 14:22-33]. I can relate to the overwhelming fear of the disciples. And I also cherish the encouragement to overcome our fears, catching courage from one another."

One of the peace activists from whom Kelly caught courage was Jesuit priest Daniel Berrigan. In 1980, Berrigan and seven other peace work-



Razia Ahmed

ers broke into a nuclear missile plant in King of Prussia, Pa., hammered on two war-head nose cones, poured blood on some of the documents they found, and offered prayers for peace. Their actions started the Plowshares movement, which aims to literally enact the prophet Isaiah's words: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

Inspired in part by Berrigan's work, Kelly joined the Missouri Peace Planting in 1988. She broke into a U.S. military installation housing nuclear missiles and unlawfully planted corn in the ground to symbolically reclaim the land from war. The peace planting resulted in her first long-term prison term—nine months in a maximum-security federal prison in Kentucky. It would not be her last.

After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Kelly joined the Gulf Peace Team, a group of dozens of peace workers from around the world who established a camp on the border between Iraq and Saudi Arabia in order to provide a direct, nonviolent presence opposing the world's rush to war. Building on this experience, Kelly co-founded Voices in the Wilderness in 1995 to draw attention to the humanitarian catastrophe caused by the 1991 Gulf war and the continuing sanctions against Iraq. From 1996 to 2003, Voices organized more than 70 delegations to Iraq, openly defying the U.S. blockade. In 2003 she helped lead the Iraq Peace Team—an international nonviolent presence in Baghdad during the U.S. invasion.

In 2000, the American Friends Service Committee nominated Kelly for the Nobel Peace Prize as "an expression of the importance of the individuals who transform a personal commitment to peace into visible and effective action." She was also nominated for the award in 2002 by Irish Nobel Laureate Mairead Maguire and, again, anonymously, in 2003.

The U.S. government eventually prosecuted Voices in the Wilderness for illegally delivering banned medicines and children's toys to Iraqi hospitals and imposed a \$20,000 fine. Although the government never tried to collect the fine, in 2005 Kelly and others founded a successor organization, Voices for Creative Nonviolence, to continue their work. Since then, VCNV has organized several campaigns of active resistance in the U.S. and sent dozens of delegations of ordinary Americans to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq.

I NOW REALIZE the impact of Kelly's song that day at Georgetown University. Like so much of her work, it was a conscious strategy of connection.

Peace work is as much about making connections as anything else: making the intellectual connections between institutionalized violence and poverty and the



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emotional connections between our choices and their consequences, and building concrete, physical connections between our diverse human communities.

A fundamental truth obscured by years of violence and suffering is that places such as Iraq and Afghanistan are not, in fact, “war zones,” but nations of deep history. They are places of marriage and love, of children and artistry, of entrepreneurship and creativity, of grief and joy, and of suffering and perseverance. They are lands of human devotion to which war has been brought by militants of many nations and ideologies—and

“I cherish the encouragement to overcome our fears, catching courage from one another.”

prolonged by our collective inability to effectively oppose them.

“At its core,” says Kelly, “war is impoverishment. War’s genesis and ultimate end is in the poverty of our hearts. If we can realize that the world’s liberation begins within those troubled hearts, then we may yet find peace.”

I recently asked Kelly what advice she had for young people thinking about doing peace work themselves. “Young people could, understandably, feel sullen and resentful about the world they’re inheriting,” she said, “but I’m hoping they’ll find resilience more attractive. My advice to them would be to find kindred spirits. Learn about courage, the ability to control your fears, in all kinds of exciting, interesting ways, ranging from your current crush to jumping off the high-diver.”

“Give yourself a pat on the back for the good you’ve done. And always remember that if you spread the peanut butter too thin, the bread rips.”

At 59 her hair is starting to show more gray than brown, but her passion and good humor haven’t changed. Although she stands only 5-foot-3, Kathy Kelly still towers over most everyone I’ve ever known. ■

***Ramzi Kysia** is an Arab-American pacifist and writer. He volunteered several times in Iraq with Voices in the Wilderness from 1999 to 2003 and has worked on peace and justice projects in the U.S., Europe, and throughout the Middle East.*

Stories Worth Telling

IN HER JEWISH school in Montreal, Ronit Avni learned the tragic history of her people. Her Canadian mother and Israeli father had met in the '60s when her mother was living in Israel and working as a folk singer, often performing for Israeli troops. Her older sister was born in Tel Aviv, but the family settled back in Montreal in the mid-'70s before Ronit was born.

Not strictly religious but committed to the values of Judaism, Ronit couldn't help but ask probing questions as she listened to the stories of the birth of the modern state of Israel in 1948. *Am I hearing the whole story? How do Palestinian perspectives differ from what my educators and community leaders are teaching? How can we transform this situation from a zero-sum equation to one that respects the dignity and freedom of all?*

Years later, having graduated with honors from Vassar College



Filmmaker Ronit Avni

Her film *Encounter Point*, about Israelis and Palestinians who have lost family members, land, or liberty to the conflict yet choose forgiveness and reconciliation rather than revenge, gave me hope that peace can emerge from pain.

In *Budrus*, she tells the story of a Palestinian father and daughter who galvanize their entire community—and many Israeli activists—to use nonviolent means to achieve freedom for the threatened village of Budrus. Hailed in *The New York Times* as “this year’s must-see documentary,” *Budrus* helped me understand the power of nonviolent resistance.

Just Vision recently released the short film *My Neighborhood*, a heart-breaking story of Palestinian families threatened with eviction from their homes. I was particularly moved by the actions of a middle-aged Israeli mother—a woman a lot like me—who never intended to be an activist but couldn't remain silent in the face of injustice.

During a recent visit to Chicago, Ronit joined me for lunch. The timing was perfect. I had just given several talks challenging American Christians to engage in an authentically pro-Israeli, pro-Palestinian, pro-peace, and pro-Jesus conversation. While some people welcomed my message, others held to a political or theological position that forced

them to choose sides and to accuse me of naiveté. Some even suggested that since I don't spend more time denouncing suicide bombers and terrorists I must secretly support the extremists who threaten Israel.

Let me make myself clear: I denounce every act of violence that threatens any Israeli or Palestinian civilian. I denounce terrorism whenever it occurs and whoever perpetrates it. But Ronit reminded me why I travel so frequently to Israel and the Palestinian territories. It's because of the peacemakers—the Israelis and Palestinians, the Christians, Muslims, and Jews—who refuse to be enemies, who work together for a future in which all the people of the Holy Land live in security and freedom and equality and dignity. We hear plenty about people committed to violence. What we need is to hear more about the people committed to peace.

Do you want to be inspired? Spend some time at www.justvision.org. Let Ronit introduce you to the hundreds of heroes on the ground who work for peace and justice every single day. Learn from them. Pray for them. And whenever you have a chance, tell their stories. ■

Lynne Hybels, co-founder of Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois, is author of *Nice Girls Don't Change the World*.

We need to hear more about the people committed to peace.

with a degree in political science after studying theater at a conservatory in Montreal, Ronit trained human rights advocates worldwide to produce videos as tools for public education and grassroots mobilizing.

By the time I met Ronit a few years ago, she had narrowed her worldwide focus to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where her heart was most deeply drawn. She is the founder and executive director of Just Vision, an organization dedicated to increasing media coverage and support for Palestinian and Israeli efforts to end the occupation and conflict without weapons of violence.

During the last several years, my engagement in the Holy Land has been significantly shaped by Ronit.





Andrei Rublev's
Trinity icon.

RADICAL WELCOME

As demographics shift and migration brings global Christianity to the church down the street, how will U.S. congregations respond?

ONE OF THE most well-known and revered icons today is Andrei Rublev's reflection on the Holy Trinity, painted between 1422 and 1425 in Russia. It depicts three angels seated around a table that bears a chalice. The female figures form a circle evoking deep mutuality, interconnectedness, and love between one another. But the circle is open, inviting the world into this profound experience of community. As Christine Challiot, an Eastern Orthodox laywoman, wrote, "Rublev painted the three angels with a circular motion to signify their unity and equality, thus creating a unity to represent the Holy Trinity in its movement of love."

This profound reflection is set in the biblical context of giving hospitality to the stranger. The icon depicts the story of the hospitality offered by Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18:1-15 to three strangers. Abraham rushed to offer them hospitality—water and food.

The three migrating strangers are messengers of God. The text says simply that they were the Lord; interpreters see the three as the presence of the Trinity. And they, in turn, bring an announcement that Sarah, in her old age, will bear a son, fulfilling God's promises. Sarah and Abraham suddenly find the tables reversed, and they are the guests at God's table, being invited into this community of love. Thus, Catholic theologian Elizabeth Johnson explains, "This is a depiction of a trinitarian God capable of immense hospitality who calls the world to join the feast."

This biblical story is a declaration of the unexpected, life-giving presence of God, discovered through providing hospitality to strangers. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks notes that the love of strangers is declared 36 times in the Hebrew scriptures, as opposed to the love of neighbor, mentioned only once. The love of strangers and sojourners is a primary test of one's love for God; this is linked to the presence of migrating people, with whom we can unexpectedly encounter God in fresh and promising ways that open the future to new possibilities.

This intrinsic connection between the experience of God's love and the stance toward the "other" also resounds through the life and ministry of Jesus. Jesus began his life as part of an exiled, migrant family in Egypt, echoing the experience of the people of Israel. Reaching across borders and boundaries that constricted the understanding of God's love became a constant pattern in both the parables and the actions of Jesus.

THE INCREASE IN migration to the United States and the presence of 11.2 million people who are not legally authorized to be in the country has raised attention to the biblical, theological, and moral issues at stake for U.S. Christians and congregations. There is a long spiritual and practical distance from the trinitarian love so marvelously depicted in Rublev's icon, manifesting the hospitality of God both given and received, and the realities facing both documented and unauthorized immigrants. That is the challenge, indeed a test of faithfulness, facing congregations in the U.S. And it is in the concrete life of congregations where these issues must be engaged.

Congregations are faced with a calling to welcome the stranger, first of all, within the society and local community. This means ministering to the stranger's concrete physical needs, even as Abraham and Sarah did immediately to the three strangers outside their tent. Beneath this is the commitment to support refugees' dignity and protect their security and safety in a society still filled with fear, racism, and animosity toward the strangers in its midst, often exploited by crass politicians.

Beyond this, however, is a more ecclesiological and practically perplexing challenge: How does a congregation relate to, welcome, and extend its *koinonia* to those immigrants who are practicing Christians or who convert to Christianity in the midst of their sojourn? How does our belonging to one body find concrete expression in this most

specific and vital part of the church—the local congregation? Recalling that the vast majority of immigrants coming to the U.S. are Christian, and more become Christian, this is an existential challenge directly affecting thousands of the estimated 350,000 congregations in the U.S.

Crucial questions come into play. How do we deal with deep cultural and social differences in the life of a local church? Further, what is the overall goal for those who are new immigrants in our midst? Isn't the United States the great "melting pot"? Just as with Dutch, Norwegian, German, and Italian immigrants a century ago, isn't the point to get new residents assimilated to our culture and way of life? Shouldn't the church play a role in that process?

Of course, these questions have been hotly debated in both theological and sociological circles. They come against the backdrop of the forces of globalization, the growing multiculturalism in society, and the persistent search for identity and community, felt especially keenly by new immigrants. While we will return to these broader questions, first it's worth asking how the church dealt with these issues when it was being established.

The early church took root within an empire exercising its own version of "globalization" in the ancient world. Multiple cultures and languages defined the context of where Jesus lived, died, and was resurrected. Even the Jerusalem church exhibited a degree of cultural diversity. But when the gospel made that initial journey from Jerusalem to Antioch, following the vision given to Peter and his journey to Cornelius' home, the nature of the church as a multicultural body of people became intrinsic to its understanding of God's grace, power, and reconciling love.

The leadership of the early Pauline churches, as recorded by Luke, exhibited a consistent multicultural nature. Moreover, when the Council of Jerusalem met to resolve the major conflict around the understanding of gospel and culture, at one level its answer was clear. Greeks did not have to become Jewish to be part of the community of faith. But at a deeper level, this response constituted a "nonassimilation" policy of the early church.

As Korean theologian Chun Hoi Heo writes in *Multicultural Christology*: "The price of peace is not the elimination of

differences. Jews and gentiles worship together in Christ while both remain Jews and gentiles. Jesus and his followers do not aim to create a generic community of cultural homogeneity, but rather to reconcile them to God and to one another by respecting both ethnic groups as mutually interdependent. We are entrusted with that ministry of reconciliation."

THE PICTURE OF the New Testament church as a reconciled and reconciling community is compelling and clear. It is in stark contrast to the reality of most congregations in the U.S. As author Soong-Chan Rah points out, "less than 6 percent of American churches are multiethnic." This uses a generous definition of at least 20 percent of the

The love of strangers is declared 36 times in the Hebrew scriptures; the love of neighbor is mentioned only once.

congregation being from one racial-ethnic background and 80 percent from another.

The vast majority of U.S. congregations begin from a homogeneous starting point that regards the New Testament vision of a reconciled, multiracial community as a distant, unrealistic dream. But the ongoing patterns of migration to the U.S., with the growing racial and ethnic diversity in our society, threaten to turn the present reality of U.S. congregations into an ethical and theological nightmare. How long can children attend schools where 25 different languages are present, and then go to churches where there is one, or maybe two, without eventually concluding that the words and stories they hear don't seem true to what they experience?

The trends that will increase the flow of new strangers and aliens to our land mean that our society is being fundamentally transformed. In coming years there will be no racial majority in the U.S. In many locations, that's already true.

Will congregations be capable of the transformation that is essential for them to be signs of the hospitality, justice, mutuality, and reconciliation that reflect God's intention and love? Moreover, will congregations become the local laboratories of ecclesiology that demonstrate how the entrenched

divisions in world Christianity can find expressions of that unity, which is both a gift and an obligation?

We're taken back to Andrei Rublev's icon of the Trinity. The Russian Orthodox Archpriest Vladimir Borozdinov reflected theologically on this icon in an article some years ago. Explaining how the nature and functioning of the Trinity are portrayed in the icon, he said: "Every Person of the Holy Trinity, living by their mutual Holy Love, strives towards their unity and perfect proximity, trying to be as close as possible One to the Other and devote Oneself to the Other as fully as possible, offering the Other complete freedom of action."

This is a moving description of how the trinitarian love of God flows between each

person in full mutuality, responsiveness, interdependence, and equality.

This same love also reaches out in generous hospitality to the world. The circle is open in the icon, even as the circle is to be open when that love fills the body of Christ. The profound mutuality and equality necessary at the foundation of a multiracial congregation are derived from the trinitarian love of God. The qualities describing how the persons of the Trinity are interacting with one another in Rublev's icon provide the inspiring description of how those brought into the circle of the trinitarian love are to respond to one another in a worshiping community filled with the gifts of God-given diversity.

Welcoming the stranger into the life and love of a congregation, an action so indispensable for discovering anew the unity of the body, is nothing more, or less, than participating in the love of the Trinity. ■

Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, former general secretary of the Reformed Church in America, is vice-chair of Sojourners' board. This article is adapted with permission from *From Times Square to Timbuktu: A Post-Christian West Meets the Non-Western Church* (©2013, Wm. B. Eerdmans, all rights reserved).

'Why Are White People So Mean?'

THE METRO IS crowded today, and the 20-something, well-dressed white man has to stand, one hand holding the bar and the other his smartphone. It's the end of the day. All the commuters—but one—are turned toward home. The young man's face, like most of the others, is dulled with exhaustion. No one makes eye contact.

In a seat near the door, one woman sits facing everyone, looking backward. She studies the young man's face intently, uncomfortably. He shifts. She rearranges the bags at her feet. Her reflection in the window shows an ashy neck above her oversized T-shirt collar. The train hums and clicks through a tunnel. As if in preparation, she takes another sip from the beat-up plastic cup she's holding.

At last, she raises her voice and asks: "Why are white people so mean?" Boom! The electricity of America's third rail crackles through the train. Faces fold in like origami or turn blank like a screensaver.

But this was no rhetorical ques-

In the manner of the psalmists, Jeremiah, and Job, this prophetic woman had put forward her lament and accusation into the public square. Laments pierce social and religious facades to expose a fundamental injustice. They engage, as Walter Brueggemann puts it, "the most unbearable questions of faith."

For her to ask her question in Washington, D.C., as the old folks say, is "more than a notion." It gets at the "unbearable questions" that must be engaged if this democracy is to be more than a pretense.

What do we know about the social location of her question? She asks it in a city in which the White House and the Capitol were built 220 years ago by chattel slaves "borrowed" from plantations in Virginia. Less than 80 years ago, 23-year-old George Armwood was tortured, mutilated, and lynched in Maryland for supposedly assaulting a white woman. Three years ago, a member of the Congressional Black Caucus was called the "n" word and another was spat upon by a white health-care protester. This woman's question is freighted with history. And—historically speaking—she's right, white people *are* mean. The question of *why* we are is much more complex.

Traditional laments, according to Brueggemann, engage three parties: the speaker, God, and the adversary. In this equation, we, white Americans, are the adversary. White Americans have constructed and maintain a moral universe where we are normative and good. We are fully oriented—like fish in water—toward the economic and social benefits of white



The Sun

supremacy. It requires a prophet's lament to disorient us. What we *do* with our disorientation is an essential question of faith for white American Christians.

AT THE NEXT Metro station, passengers scatter, including the young man. I take up the question, not wanting the moment of truth lost. "Why do *you* think we are so mean?" She lays out the unvarnished story of her day: living on the street, hungry, exhausted from not sleeping, no one will look her in the eye even when she greets them. This morning, she tells me, a white policeman wouldn't quit bothering her. She had a yogurt spoon in her pocket. "He thinks I use it for drugs! He keeps saying he's gonna drag me to jail." I ask if he was right. She rolls her eyes at me, as if to say I prove her point. "I just use it for my lunch. I don't want any of that other stuff. It makes me feel bad when he talks to me like that."

Another station approaches. I get ready to exit. With a whoosh the doors slide apart. A different white man has been observing the unfolding drama from the very beginning. As he walks past her, he turns. "You shouldn't drink in public," he says. "You might say something you'll regret." ■

Rose Marie Berger is a Catholic peace activist and a Sojourners associate editor.



Laments engage "the most unbearable questions of faith."

tion. When no one answers, she asks again, this time aiming her question at the young man with his phone. A flush creeps up his neck. "You look like you could be a sheriff," she says to him. "Good and mean. I can see it in your eyes. You got mean eyes." When he realizes her attention is stuck on him, he replies, "I hope I'm not mean. I try to be good."

An older man leans in to *shhhsh* her. "Sister, don't talk like that here," as if this was a topic only for the back porches in certain neighborhoods. Everyone was watching—and not watching—America's racial history play out wildly and uncontrolled, like there was a snake loose on the train.

JESUS AND THE TOP SECRET EMPIRE

In Matthew's gospel, the "littlest ones" are key to the upside-down kingdom.

WATCHING THE PBS *Frontline* documentary "Top Secret America" in April reminded me of why I read the gospels. They help me get my head screwed on right—upside-down, that is.

In that show, Pulitzer-Prize-winning reporter Dana Priest investigates the secret history of anti-terrorism in America since 9/11. "Secret" is the key word, since the public has little idea of the injustice, torture, black sites, civilian-killing drone strikes, data-mining, over-surveillance, and general terrorizing that have been done in our name and with our tax money for the past 12 years. The Boston Marathon bombings will only up the ante.

"Empire," I think as I watch. Our American empire has secret tentacles in every part of our inhabited world. Cofer Black, then head of the CIA's Counterterrorism Center, announced after we were attacked on 9/11, "The gloves come off!" In other words, we will do whatever it takes to obliterate al Qaeda. "We went in [to Afghanistan] to kick ass. And we did!"

Restraining gloves have apparently stayed off, since little has changed in the Obama administration. No current national security big shot would speak to *Frontline*. It's "top secret," of course, since in public we are supposed to be a democracy and not an empire.

I THINK OF texts from the gospel of Matthew—radical texts penned under the thumb of the Roman Empire. A couple of years ago, I was asked to write "insight essays" for a teacher's guide in the "Gather 'Round" series of Sunday school lessons for children and youth published by the Brethren Press and MennoMedia. The first seven lessons leading up to Easter were centered on texts from Matthew 18-28. I struggled to find a common thread running through these stories and sayings leading up to the final events in Jesus' life.

I knew that the author of this gospel was highly organized, presenting Jesus as the new Moses whose five speeches—representing the five books of Moses—blast legalism and raise the moral bar on the original Mosaic Law. The narrative sections between the speeches show how Jesus puts what he says into practice. I saw Jesus' nonviolent activism begin with his rejection of empire during the desert temptations (Matthew 4:1-11) and end with his refusal to fight with the sword when he is arrested (26:52-53). I had read New Testament scholar Warren Carter's book *Matthew and Empire*, which identifies Jesus' political platform in this gospel as a radical alternative to Rome's empire. But could I find an underlying theme in the texts that had been assigned to me?

Photo by Julie Wheeler





Here are the texts, with brief descriptions. Below that is what I learned as I played with them.

- 18:1-5—believers must become like children if they want to enter God’s kingdom
- 18:6-9—hyperbole about drowning and cutting off limbs if someone offends “little ones”
- 18:10-14—parable of the lost sheep
- 18:15-20—what to do if someone offends you
- 19:13-15—Jesus blesses the children
- 25:31-46—the future judgment of the nations
- 26:1-13—a woman anoints Jesus
- 26:36-27:66—Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion

These texts, I came to see, are dominated by the upside-down idea that it is “little ones” who make up the core of God’s kingdom. As in Mark and Luke, Matthew presents Jesus announcing the reign of God as a political and social alternative to the Jerusalem temple system that was working hand-in-glove with its Roman overlords and occupiers.

THE PRIME EXAMPLES of humble, powerless people in those days were children (18:1-5). Jesus does not focus on them because they are innocent and trusting, but because they have no social status. Babies were not named, nor boys circumcised, until after their first week of life, since many did not survive that long. Nearly half would die before age 12. Society invested little in its weaker members until they proved hardy enough to grow up. But in Jesus’ realm, children are ranked highest *because* they are the most powerless and vulnerable members of society.

Note that Jesus blesses the children (19:13-15) *after* his speech of 18:1-35 is over and the next narrative section has begun. This illustrates not only how Jesus put his own teaching into practice, but also how his male disciples did not have ears to hear his main point, since they sternly ordered mothers and children to stay away from Jesus (19:13).

Moving to the second unit of Jesus’ sermon (18:6-9), we find drastic retribution for those who offend “little ones who believe in me” (verse 6). Does this mean child abuse? Certainly, but in light of the entire speech in chapter 18, it must also refer to any believer who has no particular status or honor,

either in church or society. Here we see that the author of Matthew collapses the story of Jesus with the story of the church of his day. The “little ones” (*micros* in Greek) are church members with low social status—the poor, women, children, former prostitutes, Samaritans, and foreigners. That Jesus is

Jesus’ kingdom looks like a threat to the present one. A killer plot is hatched.

deadly serious about respecting such people can be seen in his colorful hyperbole about drowning under a huge millstone or cutting off a hand or foot to prevent abuse.

In 18:10-14, Matthew changes Luke’s “lost sheep” from a sinner to a “little one” (verse 10) who got left behind and in whom both angels and shepherd delight more than the 99 in the fold.

The rights of a victimized “little one” are further driven home by the next unit (18:15-20) about judgment for the offender. If a *micros* has been hurt by someone in the church, she can first speak to that person in private and, if not listened to, can bring witnesses—and finally shame the abuser by bringing the matter to the whole church. The unrepentant offender, rather than the victim, must leave the church.

MY NEXT ASSIGNED text was the climax of Jesus’ fifth and final speech in Matthew—that of the “judgment of the nations” in 25:31-46. (The Greek word *ethnos* can be translated “nation” or “gentile.”) Jesus, here called the Human One, is now arrayed in glory, and the nations come before him for judgment on the basis of how they have treated his “little ones.” I agree with Warren Carter that here “little ones” refers to disciples who have been sent out to proclaim the gospel without money, sandals, or a change of clothing (10:8-15). But now they are of even lower status. They are “the least” (25:40), the superlative of *micros*—the “*littlest* ones.” Jesus identifies with these “littlest ones” as his sisters and brothers. Gentiles who have responded to and cared for these low-status workers are invited into Jesus’ eternal kingdom, while those who have rejected them are sent away.

But all of that lies in the apocalyptic future. After Jesus’ final speech, the drumbeat of

empire and its colluding local temple-clients begins. Jesus’ upside-down kingdom looks like a threat to the present one. A killer plot is hatched (26:1-5).

Yet in a last interlude of comfort before the darkness falls, we meet one more “little one” in 26:6-13—a nameless female disciple

who has ears to hear, and who understands. She anoints Jesus’ head with ointment in the tradition of Israelite kings, knowing that it also symbolizes his death and burial under the present empire. Once again, the men don’t get it and only see her action as a useless waste (verse 8).

The next lesson text (26:36-27:66) is long, bleak, and brutal. Jesus himself becomes “the least of these”—the *littlest* one. Treated as a criminal, a rebel, a threat to empire, he nevertheless maintains his nonviolent convictions. The cost is horrific. He descends into such shame his male followers cannot risk watching—only women (the *micros* disciples) stay as his naked body convulses in agony, and dies.

We all know that wasn’t the end—but how would we know this without the faithful contingent of “little ones” whose gender always placed them below the status of men and usually erased them from the public record? How would we know there really is an upside-down kingdom to be inherited by the *littlest* ones and those who have cared for them?

AND SO I watch “Top Secret America,” wondering what terrible things the empire does in my name that I don’t know about and hating many things I do know about. Then I reread the gospels to remember an alternative—an open-source “kin-dom” instead of a top secret empire. Jesus became the *littlest* one for us. Calling himself the Human One, he asks us to search for lost sheep, to care for the powerless among us, and to follow him in challenging both empire and church when they dominate and abuse little ones. ■

Reta Halteman Finger, who taught Bible at Messiah College in Grantham, Pa., is the author of *Roman House Churches for Today: A Practical Guide for Small Groups*.

Struggle of Faith

Early morning
before he unlocks the church gate
the rector kneels before
the gridiron fence surrounding the Cathedral,
not in prayer
but to collect empty wine bottles,
snack bags, and used condoms.

After shoving them into a bag
he turns the latch key and enters the churchyard
shutting it behind him.
The hollow, thunderous deadbolt
echoes through trees like the voices of
ancient saints.

The garden before him remains
a sunlit shrine
to the transfiguration of Christ,
and, when open to the public,
serves as a refuge for the homeless and despairing.

The rector walks briskly into the church kitchen,
dropping his bag into a corner,
then washes his hands in the sink.
The running water recalls
a chapel service he once attended
along the Maine seacoast,
his bare feet
sinking into the warm sand;
the reverend's words and hymn singing
merging with the ocean's ebb and flow like an orchestra.

He walks silently into the sanctuary
touching the bolted-down pews
until he reaches the sacred altar.
Lighting a votive candle,
he looks up to the glittering stained-glass tableau of the crucifixion.

Kneeling again,
he prays that his calm
will bring light to the everlasting question:
"How do we overcome our crisis of faith?"

Hours pass
while the glow cast upon the pulpit fades
with the sunset.
Suddenly he rises and
opens all the outer doors and gates
onto the overflowing humanity outside
and buries the gate keys inside his worn robe.

Leigh Donaldson is a member of the Cathedral of St. Luke in Portland, Maine. His book about the antebellum African-American press in the Northeast will be published by McFarland in 2014.



David McGlynn



"Holding Grandmother's Quilt," featured in the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, spans two walls in the Mantua neighborhood. The mural celebrates community leader Miss Jones (inset) and the value of intergenerational learning. The mural was a collaboration between the nonprofit Philadelphia Green and students in muralist Jane Golden's "Big Picture" class at the University of Pennsylvania.

By Julie Polter

BEYOND 'RUIN PORN'

Reimagining the geographies of the city—a place where the story of our salvation is played out.

UNTIL RECENTLY, a company in New York City offered "a ride through a real New York City 'ghetto'"—a \$45 bus tour of the Bronx, reportedly patronized mainly by European and Australian tourists. One news report described the tour guide sharing lurid stories of crime and arson from the '70s and '80s, making insensitive comments about everything from local architectural landmarks to people waiting in line at a food pantry, and warning about the "pickpockets" in wait in a certain park. After an outcry from residents and officials, angry that the place they call home would be reduced to out-of-touch stereotypes, the tour company shut down in May.

That someone would even think of fleecing misguided tourists this way hints at the complicated, sometimes contradictory, role that cities play in our culture: In our collective imagination they represent both civilization's pinnacle (arts, style, technology, intellectualism, innovation, industry, finance) and depravity's depths (crime, corruption, exploitation, decadence, filth). For much of the 20th century, many people of means fled cities for the pastoral promise of the suburbs, while many a farm girl or boy dreamed of escaping to a city and tasting the bustle and thrill: "Until I saw your city lights, honey I was blind."

Photos by Jack Ramsdale

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Brittany Shoot reviews *Beyond the Possible*



And yet cities are not only symbols, but real and intricate places. Whether booming or busting, they shape and are shaped by the people in them. Both the built structures and the people of a city have stories to tell. But a fleeting tour-bus view with distorted narration can lead us down an alley with no exit.

Here are some different takes on the bright lights of the big city.

“RUIN PORN” is a phrase usually credited to James Griffioen, who writes the blog “Sweet Juniper!” from his home in the once-mighty, now-colonized Detroit. The phrase arose from Griffioen’s critique of journalists who used shots of Detroit’s crumbling infrastructure mainly to illustrate stories on the 2008 financial crisis, while ignoring the long history and timeline behind most of the deterioration. He considered this a detached, exploitive use of the images (parallel to pornography). In Detroit, where “government by the people” has been usurped by an unelected

“emergency manager,” the accurate preservation of history and grassroots stories are among the few forms of power left for regular citizens.

As some argue, documenting the abandoned public buildings and homes in struggling cities such as Detroit is not an inherently bad thing—or a new one. Richard B. Woodward, writing for *ARTnews*, notes that “it’s hard to think of many historical periods or genres that aren’t littered with scenes of decay and havoc. ... to condemn images of blasted lives and places

Beauty, intentionally deployed, is a force to be reckoned with.

that carry a whiff of ‘exploitation or detachment’ would be to do away with a sizeable chunk of pictorial and written history.” In the internet era, images are often even more untethered from explanatory framing. But, Woodward asks, “Is no news better than bad news?”

Woodward cites photographer and sociologist Camilo José Vergara as an example of photography immersed in context and the long view. Vergara specializes in urban photography in poor and racially segregated areas; he revisits cities and specific buildings over many years, supplementing his photos with research and interviews. As Vergara writes on his website (camilojosevergara.com), “I have photographed urban America systematically. ... Along the way I became a historically conscious documentarian, an archivist of decline, a photographer of walls, buildings, and city blocks.”

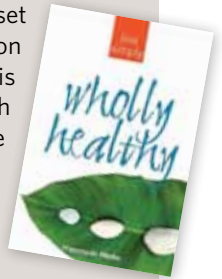
The website Rustwire.com provides excellent, balanced coverage of post-industrial Rust Belt cities, including wrestling with the ambiguities of ruin porn. Writer and Cleveland resident Richey Piiparinen has several essays on Rust Wire that argue there’s positive potential in images of battered cities and stories of how they got that way, a counternarrative to the myth of infinite growth. Piiparinen writes, “being broken is the key to transformation. Which means the future of America is about reimagining the geographies of its past.”

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New & Noteworthy

SIMPLE TRUTHS

The *Live Simply* series, a set of four booklets based on the values of St. Francis of Assisi, is packed with practical, portable advice about ethical eating, holistic health, creation care, and sensible shopping. Ideal for anyone seeking a life of simplicity and satisfaction in a world of consumption. Franciscan Media

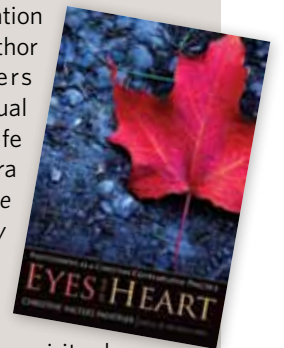


LOST AND FOUND?

A decomposing body is found in the Sonoran Desert, with a tattoo, “Dayani Cristal.” The documentary *Who is Dayani Cristal?* shows the efforts to find out who this mysterious migrant was and the journey he likely followed. A haunting look at the people affected by the politics of immigration. www.whoisdayanicristal.com

SEEING HOLINESS

Inspired by meditation and mysticism, author Christine Valters Painter makes visual prayers come to life through the camera lens in *Eyes of the Heart: Photography as a Christian Contemplative Practice*. Each chapter includes a spiritual practice, reflection questions, and stunning black-and-white or full-color photography. Sorin Books



CHRONIC LOVE

In *Sober Mercies: How Love Caught Up with a Christian Drunk*, recovering alcoholic Heather Kopp details how she hit rock bottom—only to discover that God’s grace knows no limit. A bluntly honest must-read for people of faith struggling with addiction or a loved one’s substance abuse. Jericho Books

Too Happy?

IN THE PAST 150 years, the songs historically known as “Negro spirituals” have worn many costumes. They emerged, of course, from the Deep South during the days of slavery, when songs such as “Every Time I Feel the Spirit” or “Wade in the Water” were first sung by anonymous psalmists wielding hoes or pulling cotton sacks. Since that time they’ve been dressed in the style of the European art song, sung as grand opera, or even faithfully mimicked by well-meaning white folk singers.

The spirituals entered the mainstream of American culture through the performances of the Fisk Jubilee Singers from Fisk University in Nashville who, fresh out of slavery themselves, toured the North in the 1870s. In the 1950s and ’60s, the old standards were resurrected, and slightly rewritten, as marching songs for the African-American freedom movement and then echoed across the world as anthems for



Singer Bobby McFerrin

as theme music by the George H.W. Bush presidential campaign.

McFerrin’s been doing penance ever since. He really is a talented guy with a wide-ranging and versatile voice and an old-time scat singer’s gift for improvisation. But he wasn’t faking the feel-good optimism of his signature song. That unrelentingly positive spirit of “Don’t Worry” floats through everything

he sings and, to my ears, sets up some serious cognitive dissonance with the spirituals.

The spirituals are tragedy. That’s what makes them great art. They unblinkingly confront the abyss of suffering that is the universal human fate. “Sometimes I feel like a motherless child.” It doesn’t get any starker than that. The horror in the songs comes from digging deep into the very specific pain of the slave experience, in which separation of mother and child, for instance, was an everyday thing. And that depth is what makes the music’s appeal universal and cathartic.

Of course, the spirituals are Christian art, so tragedy can’t have the last word. The genre can really be summed up with two lines from a song: “Nobody knows the

trouble I’ve seen, glory hallelujah ... Nobody knows but Jesus.” It’s precisely because the singer is so submerged in the pain of crucifixion, and able to join that pain to the suffering of Christ, that the music can make a convincing case for the resurrection. That “affirmation in the negative” is what makes the spirituals great theology. You could almost call them a body of apologetics with a backbeat.

To his credit, McFerrin seems to realize that he may not have the chops to carry the full weight of the tradition, and he does avoid the bleakest songs, like “Motherless Child” and “Nobody Knows.” But even on his “Wade,” the waters are remarkably untroubled. One of McFerrin’s own compositions on the album, “25:15,” a gutbucket take on Psalm 25:15, actually gets closer to the ethos and aesthetic of the spirituals than do his renditions of the traditional songs.

However, all quibbles aside, McFerrin at least deserves our gratitude for giving new audiences a chance to hear and think about this great tradition. ■

Danny Duncan Collum, author of the novel *White Boy*, teaches writing at Kentucky State University in Frankfort.

Bobby McFerrin’s “don’t worry” optimism sets up some serious cognitive dissonance with the spirituals.

human rights from South Africa to Northern Ireland to Eastern Europe.

After all that, the spirituals can probably even survive being remade into “smooth jazz,” which is more or less what happens to them on Bobby McFerrin’s new album *Spirityouall*. Readers of a certain age might remember McFerrin as the guy who, in 1988, conquered the known pop music universe with an air-headed ditty called “Don’t Worry, Be Happy.” The tune was so infectious that it should have had a warning label from the Centers for Disease Control, but instead it dominated radio, won some Grammys, and, to McFerrin’s eternal horror, was used



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Transformation is a theme of Philadelphia's Mural Arts Program. Catholic theologian Maureen H. O'Connell explores the power of the creative process, placement, and imagery of these artworks in the book *If These Walls Could Talk: Community Muralism and the Beauty of Justice* (Liturgical Press).

These murals are not just pretty facades (although O'Connell makes clear in the section "Beauty: Arts and the Body Politics" that beauty, intentionally deployed, is a force to be reckoned with). As Mural Arts Program director Jane Golden writes in the book's foreword, the murals are the end result of a highly engaged community process: "Stakeholder groups have grown from clusters of neighbors to entire city departments, transit systems, and citywide dialogues. ... the Mural Arts organization has expanded its reach into correctional facilities, social service agencies, and Philadelphia public school campuses."

O'Connell digs deep into how racism, poverty, and violence are dehumanizing forces that distort our cities and society as a whole. The mural process, with its sharing of stories and creation of beauty that respects—rather than denies—suffering, helps seed hope and spur social change. She writes, "the common beauty that the murals create reminds us that the common good is not something that we think about but rather something that we actually draft, dream, construct, craft, and hone in collaboration with one another."

Presbyterian pastor and author Eric O. Jacobsen also thinks theologically about towns, cities, and human community. He focuses on the "built environment"—not just buildings, but the spaces in between, encompassing all human-made surroundings, from parks and sidewalks to the public utilities buried beneath them. The built environment is the setting for our daily lives and interactions.

It "is also a place where the story of our salvation is played out," and thus worthy of informed, faithful engagement, as Jacobsen asserts in his recent book, *The Space Between: A Christian Engagement with the Built Environment* (Baker Academic). He notes that this can be counterintuitive for many Christians. Because in Genesis everything is "very good" in the original garden—but

BY GARETH HIGGINS

ONFILM

Ryan Goslin
in *The Place
Beyond the
Pines*



BEAUTY AS ANTIDOTE

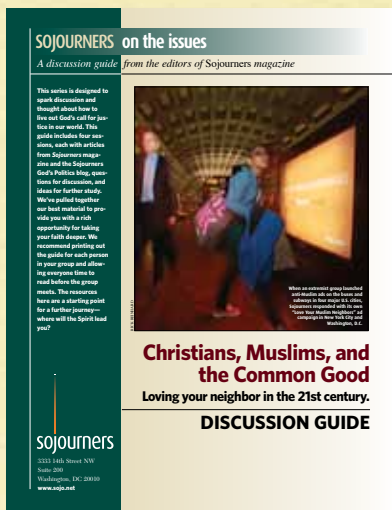
THE EXPERIMENTAL psychologist Steven Pinker writes that what we think we have seen will shape what we expect to occur. It doesn't make the news when people die peacefully in their sleep, or make love, or go for a walk in the countryside, but these things happen far more often—are much more the substance of life—than the acts of terror that preoccupy the media. It was horrifying when a British soldier was killed on an English street in May. But given the ensuing ethnic tension and communal judgment, it might have been useful, not merely accurate, to report that on the same day, almost 3 million British Muslims didn't kill anyone. Because violence is a pre-emptive act (I kill you because you might kill me), when we keep telling the story that the threat of massive violence is ever-present, we will behave more violently.

According to Richard Rohr, the best criticism of the bad is the practice of the better. So perhaps attention to beauty is the best alternative to our cultural obsession with blood. For me, cinema can do this better than any other art form, and is uniquely capable of transporting the imagination. Recently I've traveled to the minds of retired Israeli security service leaders agonizing over their achievements and failures in **The Gatekeepers**, gone to Louisiana for a trip around the soul of a man trying to redeem himself in **Mud**, empathized with the tragic story

of a man making bad choices to get into a better state in **The Place Beyond the Pines**, wondered at the creative process and bathed in the French countryside in **Renoir**, been reminded of and elevated into an imagining of love and its challenges in **To the Wonder**, and been provoked in **Room 237** to consider whether or not Stanley Kubrick intended *The Shining* to be a lament for the genocide that built America.

Each of these films is beautiful. But watching them required sitting through unpleasant mind-colonizing advertising, threats of prosecution, and goading to rat on other members of the audience if anyone used a camera. The process by which we experience this art is not artful. Movie theaters make consumption easier than meditation, and films aren't getting the chance to breathe. The role that cinema plays in our experience of ourselves and the world around us is too important to let the manner of its exhibition be so polluted. If beauty heals the world, and the best criticism of the bad is the practice of the better, who's up for demanding a better cinema experience? ■

Gareth Higgins is a Sojourners contributing editor and executive director of the Wild Goose Festival. Originally from Northern Ireland, he lives in Asheville, N.C.



Christians, Muslims, and the Common Good

While progress has been made in Christian-Muslim engagement since Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on Muslims in America have increased. This discussion guide is a tool to help us better understand one another as we seek ways to work side by side for the common good.

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goes downhill from there—we often assume that “the natural environment is a more godly environment and the built environment is stained by sin.” But, he says, we need to look at the end of the story, the Book of Revelation, in which John “is given an evocative picture of our lives when our relationship with God is fully restored. And that picture is not of a garden or a wilderness, but of a city.”

We, of course, live somewhere between that first garden and the eternal city. But Jacobsen skillfully articulates how the call to seek shalom—justice, right relationship with God and others, human flourishing—in this in-between place and time requires a deeper understanding of the built environment, and

he provides tools toward that understanding.

Jacobsen is a proponent of New Urbanism, a planning approach that encourages mixed-use, walkable, diverse (age, race, income level), aesthetically pleasing neighborhoods. By linking the New Urbanism approach with theological and biblical principles, *The Space Between* encourages new ways of thinking about everything from our own housing to civic engagement to church missions and ministries.

How will you seek the welfare of your city? ■

Julie Polter is an associate editor of Sojourners.

Reviewed by Betsy Shirley

A NEW WAVE

The Evangelicals You Don't Know: Introducing the Next Generation of Christians, by Tom Krattenmaker. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

FOR ANYONE who's sick of explaining that not all evangelicals are flag-waving, Quran-burning, gay-hating, science-skeptic, anti-abortion ralliers, *The Evangelicals You Don't Know: Introducing the Next Generation of Christians* provides a boost of encouragement. Written by frequent *USA Today* contributor Tom Krattenmaker, this who's who of “new-paradigm evangelicals” explains how a growing movement of Jesus-followers are “pulling American evangelicalism out of its late 20th-century rut and turning it into the jaw-dropping, life-changing, world-altering force they believe it ought to be.”

Unlike their predecessors, these new evangelicals are characterized by a willingness to collaborate with members of other religions and no religion for the common good, warm acceptance of LGBTQ folks, a rejection of the dualistic pro-life vs. pro-choice debate, and a desire to participate in mainstream culture rather than wage war against it. All this “while lessening their devotion to Jesus by not a single jot or tittle.”

Admittedly, the book's cover photo doesn't quite do justice to Krattenmaker's observations. Featuring young worshipers in a dark sanctuary with hands uplifted and eyes closed, each apparently lost in a private moment of four-chord progression praise, the cover looks more like a Hillsong worship concert circa 1998 than cutting-edge 2013 evangelicals. (If

you're unfamiliar with the four-chord progression, Google “how to write a worship song in five minutes or less.” You're welcome.)

Yet Krattenmaker emphasizes that evangelicals are moving out of darkened sanctuaries and opening their eyes to the messy and beautiful world outside of their Christian subculture. He writes: “Moved by a new rallying cry—engage!—new-century evangelicals are finding faith-stirring beauty in secular creative works and making their own contributions to that once-verboten place called mainstream culture.” Evangelicals are also venturing beyond the walls of megachurches to volunteer at failing public schools, stop the sex trade industry, and provide homes for foster children, a “no-strings-attached, no proselytizing form of engagement” that turns many assumptions about U.S. evangelicals on their head.

One disappointment: I count only three evangelical women—Julie Clawson, Lisa Sharon Harper, and Stephanie Tama-Sweet—mentioned at any length throughout the book. Three. Krattenmaker acknowledges this “disproportion,” but explains that “this parallels an unfortunate reality about this new evangelicalism (and the old one, too)—namely, that the movement is largely led by men.” Huh? While Krattenmaker expresses a sincere hope that he'll encourage more women to step forward, I don't see evangelical

women waiting around for his invitation.

Consider Rachel Held Evans, Lynne Hybels, Jennifer Knapp, or Katharine Hayhoe—women who have been champions of, respectively, a nonliteral reading of scripture, justice for Palestinians, gay rights, and action against climate change. Say it with me: Women are just as involved in the new currents of evangelicalism as their male counterparts. And unlike previous generations of evangelicals, these pioneering women aren't going to let a bad exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:12 keep them quiet.

Nevertheless, I appreciated Krattenmaker's desire to present an often-overlooked side of evangelicalism that has "quieter voices and more attentive ears" than the Pat Robertson-type personalities who get a lot more press. "Meet the Christian non-totalitarians, the evangelical pluralists, who are at peace with different beliefs and feel no compulsion to defeat them," he writes, "who are willing to go to work with anyone ... to support that struggling school, feed those starving kids, free that sex slave, protect those innocents under threat of war or poverty, and bring an overdue dose of humility and decency to politics." Amen.

Yet, a question lingers. Though Krattenmaker sprinkles phrases such as "new evangelicals" or "new-paradigm evangelicals" liberally throughout his pages, I rarely saw quotes of the folks he profiles at length—Timothy Keller, Jonathan Merritt, Gabe Lyons, Jim Henderson—claiming that label for themselves. So I wondered: Do they even consider themselves evangelicals, "new" or otherwise?

In a 2012 interview, NPR's *On Being* host Krista Tippet asked Lyons directly about his evangelical identity. Lyons' response? "I don't really use that word," he explained. "That's how media would describe me because of how I grew up and what I believe. ... I tend to think of myself as a Christian, somebody who's trying to follow Jesus and not attach too many more labels to it."

Perhaps among the many shifts Krattenmaker identifies within American evangelicalism, we should add another: The new evangelicals don't want to be evangelicals. They just want to be Christians. ■

Betsy Shirley is a former editorial assistant at Sojourners and a M.Div. student at Yale Divinity School.



Glide Memorial

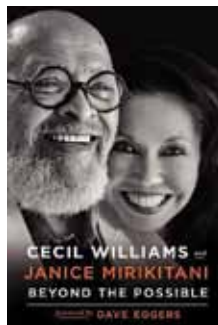
Reviewed by Brittany Shoot

CHURCH OF THE OPEN DOORS

Beyond the Possible: 50 Years of Creating Radical Change at a Community Called Glide, by Cecil Williams and Janice Mirikitani. HarperOne.

WHEN CECIL WILLIAMS was 8 years old, he imagined murdering a police officer. It's a jarring way for an influential minister to begin a memoir about radical hope and perseverance. But in a short lifetime of intense oppression, Williams had already internalized heartbreaking lessons of systemic injustice and the righteously violent tendencies that can follow. The budding young leader already nicknamed "Rev" and wise beyond his years also knew that if he could imagine brutality, he could envision a transformed society.

"Imagination is one of the most penetrating and incendiary forces I've ever experienced," he writes in *Beyond the Possible: 50 Years of Creating Radical Change in a Community Called Glide*, co-authored with his wife and longtime collaborator, Janice Mirikitani. Building on their shared vision over a remarkable half-century, they lead what might be the most exuberant congregation in America. Glide Memorial United Methodist Church and the Glide Foundation are inextricable, legendary San Francisco institutions, the latter one of the city's largest social service providers and the real-life shelter featured in the 2006 biopic *The Pursuit of Happiness*.



Writer Dave Eggers sums up Glide in the book's introduction with a simple but uncomfortable truth: There are very few places in society where someone is not left out. Houses of worship are supposed to make a dream of inclusivity possible, but even the most inspiring visionaries live and lead imperfectly. Eggers proposes that because of the unconditional love necessary for a lasting marriage between two seemingly incompatible leaders—Williams, a black Texas minister with a solid upbringing, and Mirikitani, an agnostic Japanese-American poet from a broken, abusive home—Glide is one of the few radically accepting places where true unconditional love is practiced like the most dogmatic of faiths.

In *Beyond the Possible*, Williams and Mirikitani explain how overcoming profound personal grief inspired them to lead a compassionate revolution in San Francisco's most poverty-stricken district, the Tenderloin. Williams was one of five black seminarians to attend the Perkins School of Theology when Southern Methodist University voluntarily adopted a desegregation policy, and later the budding civil rights leader marched on Selma. By the time he arrived at Glide in 1963, it was a dwindling, uninspired congregation of 35

conservative white Christians. The brash, bold black reverend didn't know how to develop a diverse community—until he looked beyond the church building and into the faces of local residents who desperately needed someone powerful to upend the city's sociocultural and spiritual landscape. In the mid-1960s, Glide's leaders began organizing for civil rights and against police brutality. By the 1970s, they were performing landmark same-sex weddings. HIV tests have long been available on demand during services. As rampant homelessness reached pandemic levels, Glide expanded shelter and free meals programs.

Within weeks of his arrival, Williams had taken off his clerical robe for good. Soon, he was pulling the somber, stories-high crucifix down from the sanctuary where he intended to celebrate life, not mourn loss. By the time he'd convinced her to work with him full-time, Mirikitani—who was later named San Francisco's second-ever poet laureate—had christened Sunday services "Celebrations" and infused weekly praise with her creative blend of poetry and theater. Former Sly and the Family Stone member John Turk brought his jazz Change Band in residence.

Every Sunday morning, Williams can still be found on the Glide stage—there is no pulpit to hide behind—enthusing, "Love everybody!" For him, it's really that simple. Above all, God is love.

That simple, powerful message rightly inspires legions of loyal supporters. I moved to downtown San Francisco two years ago, unaware I'd be living blocks from a legendary church-charity. I only knew—through a crash course in suffering that shocked even this longtime urbanite and reluctant gentrifier—that every day I met scores of desperate people living on the streets, many of them regulars in the half-mile-long, thrice-daily Glide free meals queue that forms uncomfortably close to high-end boutiques and tourist attractions. The dissonance was too great to ignore; my desire to serve had never been so urgent. By my second volunteer shift at Glide, staffers already knew my name.

Beyond the Possible is the perfect title for an inspiring portrait of transformative love and a model for a jubilant revolution. ■

Brittany Shoot is a Sojourners contributing writer.



A witness stands before South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Reviewed by Tom Getman

LESSONS IN CREATING UBUNTU

Conversations in Transition: Leading South African Voices, by Charles Villa-Vicencio and Mills Soko. David Philip Publishers.

CONVERSATIONS IN TRANSITION is a veritable graduate course in what South Africans call *ubuntu*, or good neighborliness.

Charles Villa-Vicencio and Mills Soko present 23 narratives of both well-known and unsung heroes of the anti-apartheid struggle. These narratives are filled with instructive words of wisdom for seekers of peace with justice in countries emerging

African officials and members of the Israeli and Palestinian communities, the director of a Jewish study center in West Jerusalem, Benjamin Pogrand, shared a revealing comment. He said, "TRC will never work here because Israelis do not have the theological and philosophical understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation that Muslims, Christians, and Jews shared in South Africa

Historians and activists will find hope in the stories of South Africa's courageous, diverse citizens.

from post-tyranny chaos and in long-established democracies alike. Historians and activists will find hope in the stories of South Africa's courageous, diverse citizens, as well as prophetic insights and warnings as the subjects address post-apartheid violence and oppression in a country still on the edge.

My own experiences lead me to an unqualified endorsement of this invaluable compendium. Over several decades I have pondered repeatedly two particular conversations, one with a Jew in Israel and the other with a Muslim from Cape Town.

An effort was made to introduce the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process into the Israel-Palestine conflict. At the end of an evening with South

in order to bring unity and liberation without major conflict."

The second encounter was with Rashied Omar, then an imam of a major Cape Town mosque, now a Notre Dame professor. While he was on a visit to the Geneva-based World Council of Churches, I asked him why he spent so much time with Christians when so many Christians show little understanding and even abuse Muslims. He responded, "That is a joy to answer. We have marched and worked together [in South Africa] for the end of apartheid. We have been shot, arrested, imprisoned together, and we have read each other's holy books and prayed with one another. You can preach in my mosque any time you wish.

You will always be welcome.”

Omar gave witness to *ubuntu* in his context; Pogrund acknowledged the absence of it in his. Reading *Conversations* about contributors to the South African “miracle” from various tribes, languages, religions, and cultures, I better understand the force of the testimonies by Pogrund and Omar.

As one deeply invested in both South Africa and in the Middle East for 35 years, I have awaited this book in both the general sense for guidance and specifically to receive the backstory of the successful transition from the tyranny of oppression to democracy without chaos. It provides one more reason for hope that it can happen again anywhere with the right leadership and an open, caring populace.

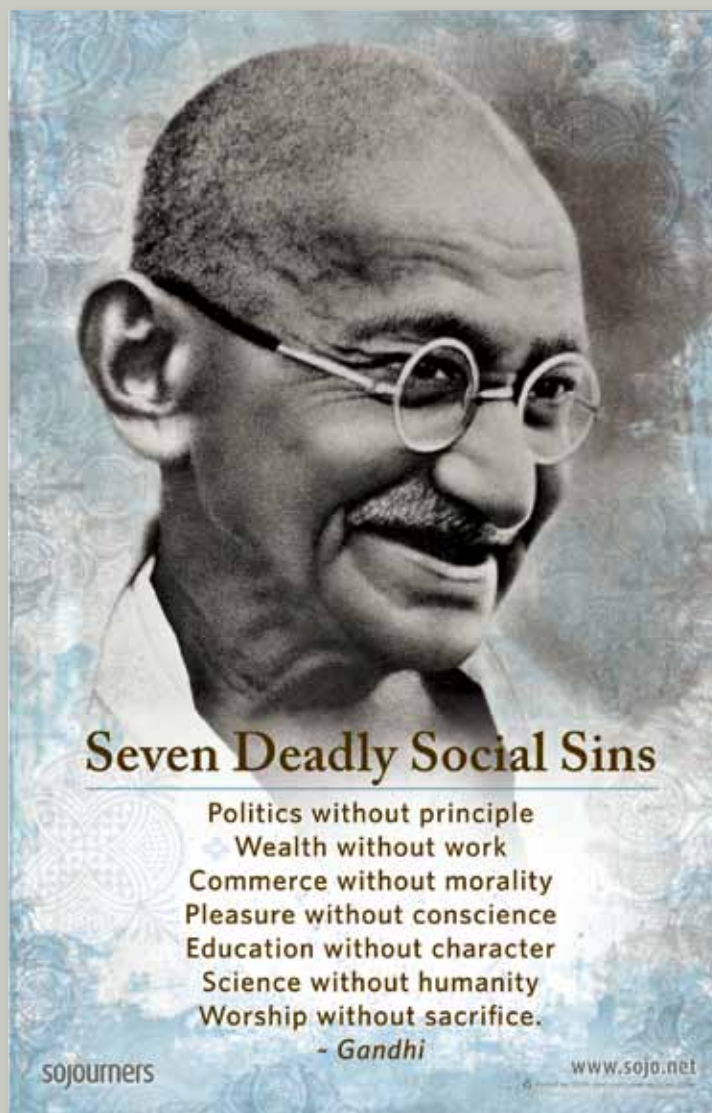
As anti-poverty and social activist Mary Burton asserts, humanity’s survival “requires the promotion of a sense of interconnectedness and empathetic identification with others.”

The present Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, Thabo Makgoba, warns in his chapter, regarding South Africa and all democracies, “If we fail to deal with the higher dimensions of existence, we are in danger of losing the battle against corruption, bad service delivery, and social inequality.”

Conversations in Transition boldly asserts that for the common good, all of us, citizens and rulers alike, must resolve to free ourselves from the shackles of the past and be held accountable to the higher demands of God. The choice we face is a spiritual one. The liberation from oppressive tyranny in society is one step, but emancipation of the spirit requires continuous renewal out of respect for and accommodation of differences rooted in a well-honed moral core.

I encourage activists to make this valuable resource part of your toolkit. It is likely to become an important reference for builders of civil society in this challenging period of history. Its well-ordered index, South African chronology, and glossary are in themselves invaluable for research. ■

Tom Getman, a *Sojourners* board member, served with World Vision for 25 years, including five years as national director in Jerusalem. *Conversations in Transition* is not in print in the U.S. but is available online.



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Living the Word

REFLECTIONS ON THE REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY, CYCLE C

BY MARTIN L. SMITH

The View from the Bleachers

THROUGH THE WRITER of the letter to the Hebrews we will be learning this month how the spiritual environment that upholds us as agents of God's reign is richly, magnificently peopled. Entering into the spirit of this letter is like finding oneself worshipping in a great Byzantine church, in which the walls are blazing with frescoes and mosaics depicting the history of salvation and the saints in all their glorious variety. The writer extols the lineage of witnesses to God down the ages. We are asked to recognize them all as a crowd of supporters cheering us on. The writer insists that we live in vibrant awareness of the great and all-embracing community that God is forging. "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant" (Hebrews 12:22-24).



This is the antithesis of the bizarre theory that "religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness," as the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead claimed. God is communion, as we try to express it in the doctrine of the Trinity. Life is interrelatedness. The baptismal creed of the church commits us to belief in the communion of saints because God recruits us for the struggle to build, sustain, and nurture community-where-God-reigns here on earth, as it is in heaven.

Martin L. Smith is an Episcopal priest, author, preacher, and retreat leader.

[AUGUST 4]

'To You, O Lord!'

Hosea 11:1-11; Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14, 2:18-23; Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 12:13-21

AS A STUDENT I once spent a vacation working in the woodlands belonging to a small band of contemplative monks. I'll never forget a conversation we had during a tea break. One of them asked, "How would you sum up the Christian life in just one phrase?" The brothers gave various answers to the riddle. I found myself choosing the response that the people sing at the end of the litanies that punctuate the Orthodox liturgy: "To you, O Lord!" The question had triggered memories of worshipping in Russian churches during the darkest days just before decades of persecution ended. This urgent prayer of turning, facing, yearning, reaching out to God seemed to say it all. Faith is life lived turned toward God.

The words that stand out in this week's story of the rich fool are, "So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21). Only what can be turned *toward* God is of value. If we tried to turn selfishly accumulated wealth toward God, its real meaning would be starkly exposed. Our reading from Colossians names it: "greed (which

is idolatry)" (3:5). It is the result of fatefully misdirected worship, worship turned inward. The skill of Jesus' storytelling is seen in the pseudo-spiritual dialogue that the rich man has with himself. He seems to pray as he addresses his own soul, taking inventory of his assets. He reviews (in 12:19) the privileged lifestyle to which he entitles himself, "And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years: Relax! Eat, drink, be merry!" The religion of self.

The letter to the Colossians urges them to sustain a radical stance of being turned toward God-and-the-Risen-Christ. "So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (3:1). This is not a dreamy other-worldliness, but the way to sustain our new identity, a new humanness that has been liberated from the trap of self-referential anxiety.

"Preaching the Word," Sojourners' online resource for sermon preparation and Bible study, is available at sojo.net/ptw.

[AUGUST 11]

Exposing Religiosity

Isaiah 1:1, 10-20; Psalm 33:12-22;
Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16; Luke 12:32-40

THE PARABLE OF the watchful slaves in Luke 12 probes our preparedness to be surprised by God, who artfully springs into our lives to overturn our expectations. The real surprise is that the owner who returns unexpectedly from his trip to a marriage feast does not immediately round up his staff to get them to dance attendance on him, as we would have predicted. “Truly, I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them” (verse 37). The parable points to the Last Supper,

the absorbing satisfaction of participating in spectacular rites.

[AUGUST 18]

Christ the Arsonist

Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 82; Hebrews 11:29-12:2;
Luke 12:49-56

CHRIST AS GOD’S arsonist! Christ the instigator of division! If we were faithful to the gospel passage that confronts us this week we would use these titles boldly. “I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled ... Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division” (Luke 12:49-51). Those who “know how to

that our turn has come in the relay race of faith. “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses ... let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith ...” (12:1-2).

[AUGUST 25]

Restored to Joy

Jeremiah 1:4-10; Psalm 103:1-8;
Hebrews 12:18-29; Luke 13:10-17

AS WE KNOW from the parable of the strong man fully armed in Mark 3, one of the images Jesus used for interpreting his vocation was that of a champion fighter with the strength to beat Satan and liberate human beings held in Satan’s bondage. In Luke’s story of Jesus healing the crippled woman, we learn that Jesus’ understanding of that captivity included every kind of diminishment that robbed people of the ordinary joys of life. The woman, just by being freed to stand tall, is set free from bondage.

I remember once preaching spontaneously on this scripture. In giving voice to the woman’s gratitude as she listed all the things she could now enjoy, I found myself exclaiming, “Wait till I get home to my husband! What a difference this is going to make to our sex lives!” which took both the congregation and myself rather by surprise. But it was true to the spirit of the healing miracles of Jesus, which restore basic human joys to those who had been robbed of them by crippling limitations.

The opening chapter of the prophecy of Jeremiah speaks of God’s power to liberate us from inhibitions that can hobble us in our prophetic ministry. The enormity of the vested interests that hold masses of human beings in deprivation is so great we feel that our words and actions are futile. We feel puny, as the young Jeremiah did. “Do not say, ‘I am only a boy’; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them” (1:7-8). We can take strength from the mysterious truth that our witness to God’s reign is not a task we choose but a vocation for which the Eternal One consecrates us. The Lord said to Jeremiah, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you” (verse 5). ■



Getty Images

and the way the One who came not to be served but to serve, washes the disciples’ feet. Judgment hinges on our preparedness to receive Christ’s offering of himself to us, as Peter learned when he tried to prevent him.

Receptivity to the self-giving of God is the key to a life of generosity, hunger for justice to be done, and commitment to the forging of the beloved community. Our self-giving in the service of justice issues from joy in being given the kingdom. “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms ... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:32-34).

The opening verses of the prophecy of Isaiah tear off the mask of religiosity to expose the hollowness behind. The prophet excoriates his contemporaries because their heart was not in the covenant that committed them to seeking justice, rescuing the oppressed, defending the orphan, pleading for the widow. The claims of the vulnerable fall on deaf ears when people are invested instead in the gratifications of religion and

interpret the present time” (verse 56) will respond to the crisis by taking stands that offend and scandalize those who are committed to the status quo and domestic security in a familiar world. Families especially will try to deter them and reclaim them. Faithfulness to Christ will involve cutting through the ties that would bind us to conventional values. Jesus invokes oracles of Micah to prove that loyalty to God will mean rejection by one’s closest kin.

The passage from Hebrews represents the opposite pole of the paradox of the life of faith. Loyalty to the reign of God means separation from relationships that would hold us back from participating in it, but it also integrates us into a new web of relationships that is rich beyond imagination. The writer names generations of prophets and martyrs who had suffered for God’s covenant, but this is no mere list of past figures. All these women and men are truly alive and gathered around us like the crowd in a stadium. They are our fans, on the edge of their seats cheering us on now

Love One Another (some restrictions apply)

NOTHING MOVES ME more than a heartfelt tweet. Seriously. Don't think I'm making fun here. I understand that the Twitter universe ("Twitterverse"? "World o' Twits"?) is the current preferred method for connecting with the most people in the shortest amount of time. It's certainly preferable to my generation's method of communicating, which was to spray-paint the sides of barns.

But if the inspirational tweet is from a member of Congress—taking time away from doing the nation's business in the most powerful city in the world, depending on where the Koch brothers are living at the time—I can get really choked up.

"My thoughts and prayers are with those in Oklahoma affected by the tragic tornado outbreak."

Oozing with empathy and originality, this tweet was sent out by Oklahoma Sen. Tom Coburn a few hours after the extreme weather event in May that ravaged the town of Moore. What the tweet did not include—and his office quickly added, lest survivors searching through the rubble for loved ones got the wrong impression—was that the senator would not support fed-



and spray-painted sides of barns, the last thing you want is some government bureaucrat arriving with a meddlesome helping hand.

That's not to say the senator wouldn't buy a dozen cookies at a bake sale for the victims. Heck, put him down for two dozen. (I'm guessing lemon is his favorite flavor. He likes the sour.)

IF SEN. COBURN was less compassionate than one would hope, at least Oklahoma's other Republican senator can be counted on for help, as his own tweet clearly shows:

"The devastation in Oklahoma is heartbreaking. Please join me and #PrayforOklahoma. Spread the word."

And with a hashtag, no less! It's like he was right there, suffering the collapse of buildings torn open by 200 mph winds instead of in his office in Washington, D.C., signing copies of his book, *The Greatest Hoax: How the Global Warming Conspiracy Threatens Your Future*, a timely work in which residents of Moore will no doubt find great comfort. Their unfortunate mishap was simply an act of God, the senator would insist, a once-in-a-lifetime event that had nothing to do with climate change and probably won't happen again for another hundred years. Or maybe next Tuesday.

And speaking of disasters, Liberty University recently offered a scholarship to North Carolina high school senior David "Cole" Withrow, who was charged with a misdemeanor after he drove to school with two shotguns in his truck. This being an obvious sign of the young man's biblical bonafides—driving the gun registrationists from the temple is one of Jesus' lesser-known acts—it naturally caught the attention of Liberty president Jerry Falwell Jr., who presides over the largest Christian university in the world. Liberty is also one of 25 U.S. colleges that allow students to bring firearms to class. And not just for show-and-tell. (Although a Glock would be WAY more interesting than European history.) Of course, students must first obtain a permit from the state of Virginia, a demanding process which requires the applicant—under the close scrutiny of state officials—to produce a driver's license.

Liberty University founder Jerry Falwell is probably smiling down from heaven right now, because he knows the only thing that stops a bad man with a gun is a good man who knows the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal savior. With a gun. ■

Ed Spivey Jr. is art director of Sojourners.

Sorry. Disasters aren't budgeted this year.

eral relief funding unless it was offset elsewhere. If it's not in the budget, according to Coburn's long-standing philosophy, it's not happening.

But let's be fair: With a tweet you only get 140 characters, so in addition to the words "thoughts" and "prayers," there's barely enough room left over to express the important concepts of "freedom," "liberty," and "bootstraps," three concepts people just love to think about when they're crawling from under what used to be their house. Coburn's point seems to be that when you're covered with sheetrock, torn family photographs,

Ken Davis

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